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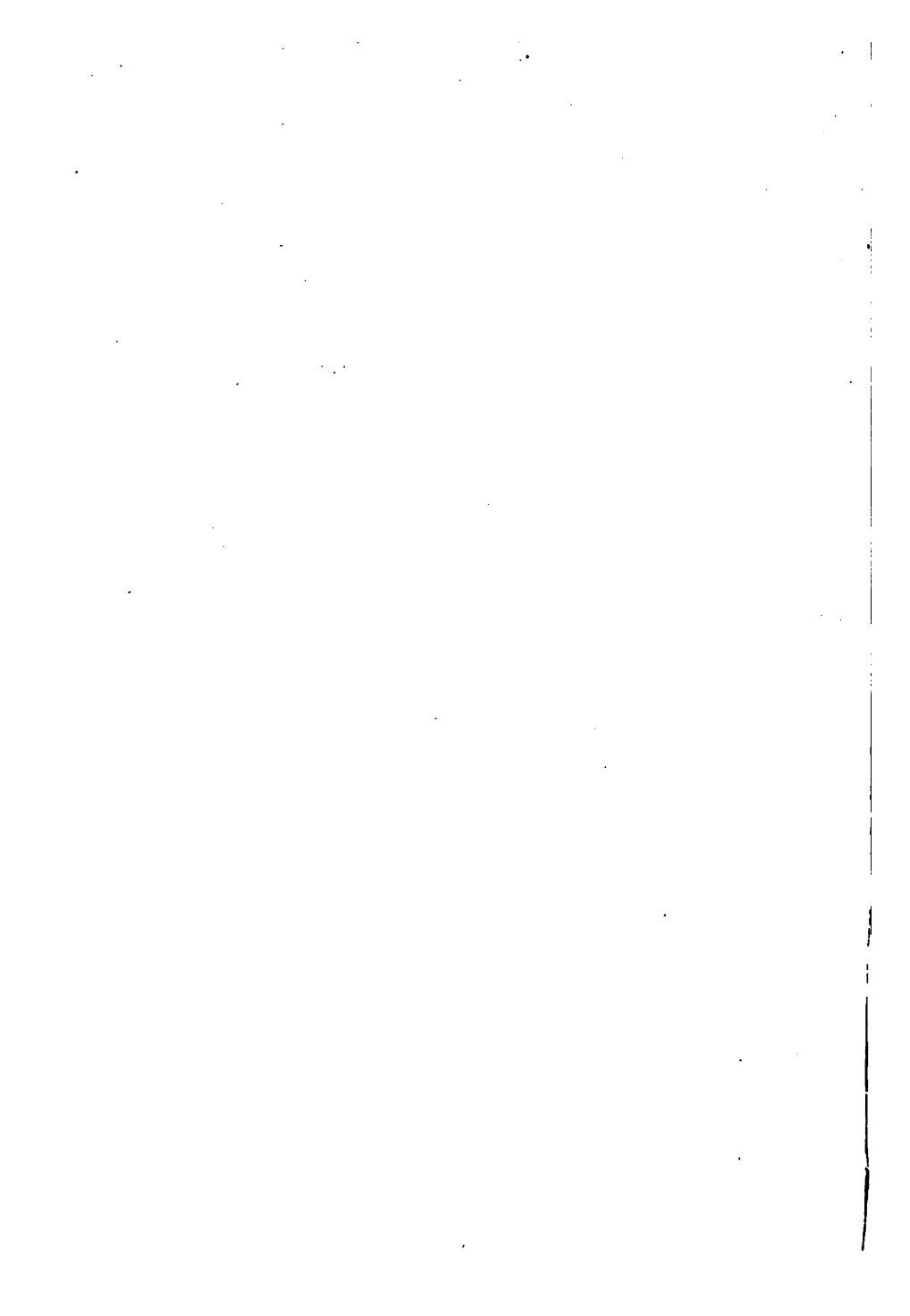
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MY YOUNG ALCIDES.



MY YOUNG LADY

1811



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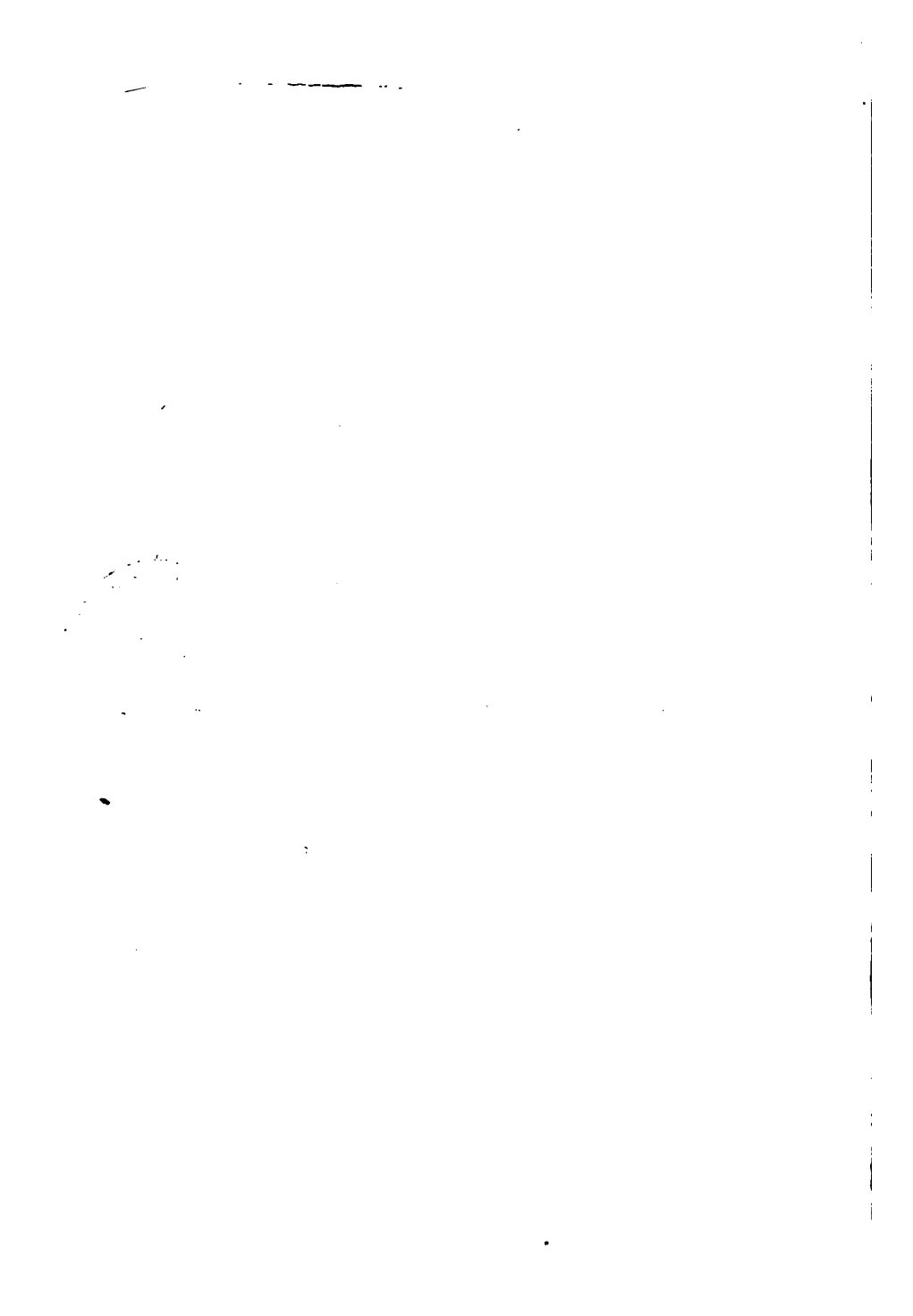
THE YOUNG LADY

1811





1777



MY YOUNG ALCIDES

A FADED PHOTOGRAPH

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF REDCLIFFE" &c.



YOUNG HERCULES. - *From a Gem*



VOL. II.

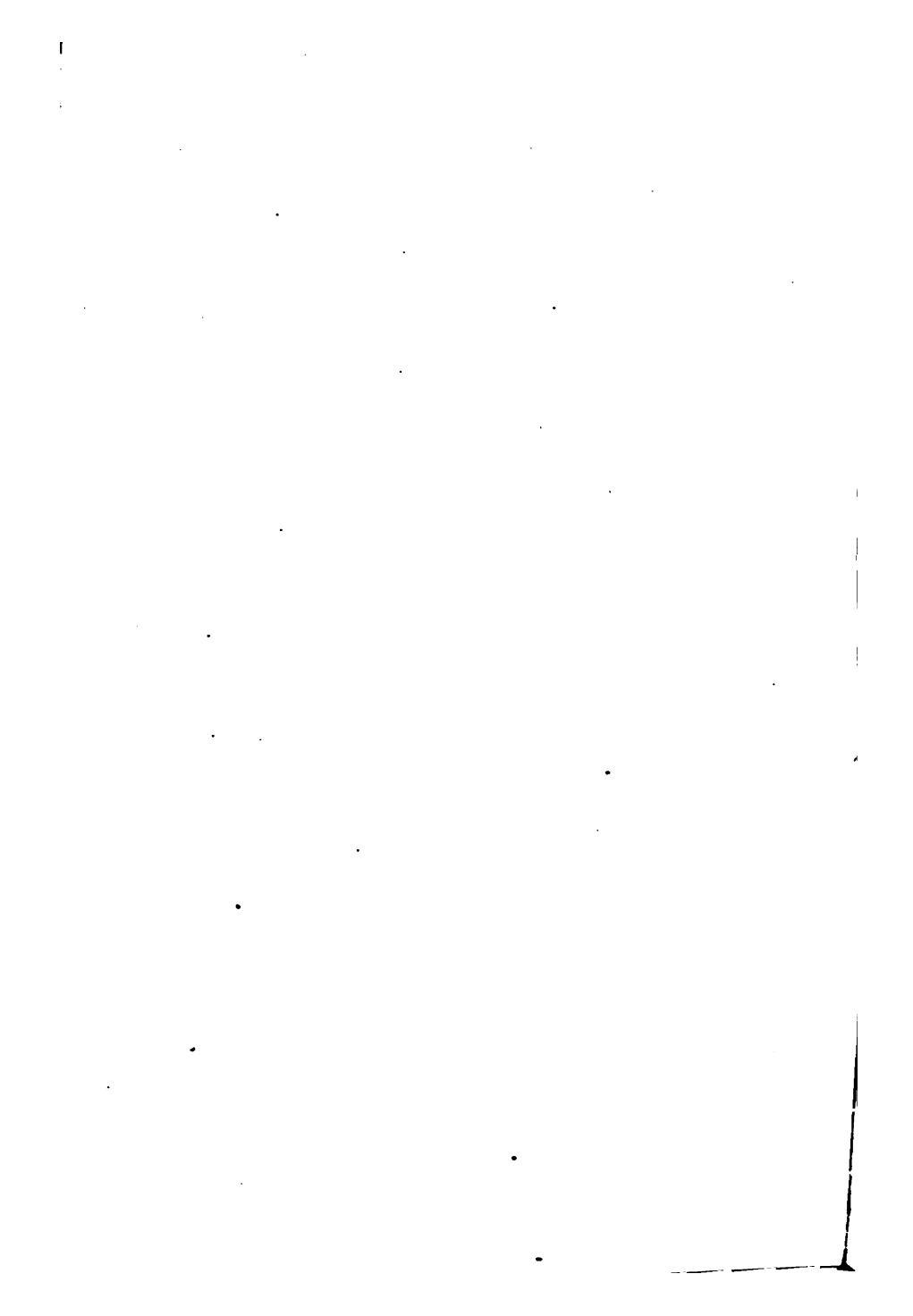
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MY YOUNG ALCIDES:

A FADED PHOTOGRAPH.

CHAPTER I.

BULLOCK'S CHASTISEMENT.

THE next frosty day Dora and I set forth for a visit to the double cottage, where, on one side, dwelt a family with a newly-arrived baby; on the other was Dame Jennings', with the dilapidated roof and chimney. I was glad to see Dora so happily and eagerly interested over the baby as to be more girl-like than I had yet seen her, though, comparing her to what she had been on her arrival, she was certainly a good deal softened and tamed. "Domesticated" would really not have

been so inappropriate a word in her case as it is in advertisements of companions.

We had come to the door, only divided from Mrs. Jennings's by a low fence and a few bushes, when voices struck on our ears, and we saw Bullock's big, sturdy, John Bull form planted in a defiant attitude in the garden-path before the door, where the old woman stood courtesying, and mingling entreating protestations against an additional sixpence a week on her rent with petitions that at least the chimney might be made sound and the roof water-tight.

There is no denying that I did stand within the doorway to listen, for not only did I not wish to encounter Bullock, but it seemed quite justifiable to ascertain whether the current whispers of his dealings with the poor were true; indeed, there was no time to move before he replied with a volley of such abuse, as I never heard before or since, at her impudence in making such a demand.

I was so much shocked that I stood transfixed, forgetting even to draw Dora away from the

sound, while the old woman pleaded that "Mr. Herod" had made the promise, and said nothing of increasing her rent. Probably Bullock had been irritated by the works set on foot at Ogden's farm, for he brought out another torrent of horrid imprecations upon "the meddling convict fellow," the least intolerable of the names he used, and of her for currying favour, threatening her with instant expulsion if she uttered a word of complaint, or mentioned the increase of her rent, and on her hesitation actually lifting his large heavy stick.

We both cried out and sprang forward, though I scarcely suppose that he would have actually struck her. But much more efficient help was at hand. Bullock's broad back was to the gate, and he little knew that at the moment he raised his stick Harold, attracted by his loud railing voice, leaped over the gate, and with one bound was upon the fellow, wresting the stick from his hand and laying it about his shoulders with furious energy. We all screamed out. Dora, it was suspected, bade him go on and give it to him well, and perhaps my wrath with the man made me simply shriek ;

but the sense of our presence did (whatever we wished) check Harold's violence so far that he ceased his blows, throwing the man from him with such force that he fell prone into the poor dame's gooseberry-bush, and had to pick himself up through numerous scratches, just as we had hurried round through the garden.

He had regained his feet, and was slinking up to the gate as we met him, and passionately exclaimed : " Miss Alison, you have seen this ; I shall call on you as my witness."

Dora called out something so vituperative that my energies went in silencing her, nor do I think I answered Bullock, though at least it was a relief to see that, having a great sou'-wester over all his other clothes, the force of the blows had been so broken that he could not have any really serious injury to complain of. It was not unfortunate, however, that he was so shaken and battered that he went first to exhibit himself to Dr. Kingston's new partner, and obtain a formidable scientific account of his sprains and bruises ; so that Eustace had heard an account of the affray in the first

place, and Dora, with a child's innate satisfaction in repeating personalities, had not spared the epithets with which Bullock had mentioned the "fool of a squire." The said squire, touched to the quick, went out invulnerable to his interview, declaring that the agent had been rightly served, only wishing he had had more, and indignantly refusing Bullock's offer to abstain from prosecuting Mr. Harold Alison on receiving a handsome compensation, and a promise never to be interfered with again. Eustace replied—too much, I fear, in his own coin—with orders to send in his accounts immediately and to consider himself dismissed from his agency from that hour; and then came back to us like a conquering hero, exulting in his own magnanimous firmness, which "had shown he was not to be trifled with."

But he did not like it at all when Richardson came in trying to look quite impassive, and said to Harold, "Some one wants to speak to you, sir."

Harold went, and returned without a word, except, "You are wanted too, Lucy;" and I was

not equally silent when I found it was to serve on me an order to appear as witness before the magistrates the next day, as to the assault upon Bullock.

Eustace was very much annoyed, and said it was disgraceful, and that Harold was always getting into scrapes, and would ruin him with all the county people, just as he was beginning to make way with them—a petulant kind of ingratitude which we had all learnt to tolerate as “old Eu’s way,” and Dora announced that if he was put in prison, she should go too.

It was only a Petty Sessions case, heard in the justice-room at Mycening, and on the way the prisoner was chiefly occupied in assuring the witness that there was nothing to be nervous about; and the squire, that it would hurt nobody but himself; and, for his part, fine him as they would, he would willingly pay twenty times as much to rid the place of Bullock.

The bench—who sat at the upper end of a table—were three or four Horsmans and Stympsons, with Lord Erymanth in *the* chair

par excellence, for they all sat on chairs, and they gave the like to Eustace and me while we waited, poor Harold having put himself, in the custody of a policeman, behind the rail which served as bar.

When our turn came, Harold pleaded "Guilty" at once, not only for truth's sake, but as meaning to spare me the interrogation; and Crabbe, who was there on Bullock's behalf, looked greatly baffled and disappointed; but the magistrates did not let it rest there, since the amount of the fine of course would depend on the degree of violence, &c., so both Mrs. Jennings and I, and the doctor, were examined as witnesses.

I came first; and at first I did not find the inquiries half so alarming as I expected, since my neighbours spoke to me quite in a natural way, and it was soon clear that my account of the matter was the best possible defence of Harold in their eyes. The unpleasant part was when Crabbe not only insisted on my declaring on oath that I did not think Bullock meant to strike the old woman, but on my actually re-

peating the very words he had said, which he probably thought I should flinch from doing; but he thereby made it the worse for himself. No doubt he and Crabbe had reckoned on our general unpopularity, and had not judged it so as to discover the reaction that had set in. An endeavour to show that we were acting as spies on the trustworthy old servant, in order to undermine him with his master, totally failed, and, at last, the heavy fine of one shilling was imposed upon Harold—as near an equivalent as possible to dismissing the case altogether. Lord Erymanth himself observed to Eustace, “that he felt, if he might say so, to a certain degree implicated, since he had advised the dismissal of Bullock, but scarcely after this fashion.” However, he said he hoped to have Eustace among them soon in another capacity, and this elevated him immensely.

The case had taken wind among the workmen at the potteries; and as we came out at their dinner-hour, there was a great assemblage, loudly cheering, “Alison, the poor man’s friend!”

Eustace stood smiling and fingering his hat, till Captain Stympson, who came out with us, hinted, as he stood between the two young men, that it had better be stopped as soon as possible. "One may soon have too much of such things;" and then Eustace turned round on Harold, and declared it was "just his way to bring all the Mycening mob after them." Whereat Harold, without further answer, observed, "You'll see Lucy home then," and plunged down among the men, who, as if nothing had been wanting to give them a fellow-feeling for him but his having been up before the magistrates, stretched out hands to shake; and as he marched down between a lane of them, turned and followed the lofty standard of his head towards their precincts.

Bullock, in great wrath and indignation, sent in his accounts that night with a heavy balance due to him from Eustace, which Harold saw strong cause to dispute. But that battle, in which, of course, Crabbe was Bullock's adviser, and did all he could to annoy us, was a matter of many months, and did not affect our life very closely.

Harold was in effect Eustace's agent, and being a very good accountant, as well as having the confidence of the tenants, all was put in good train in that quarter, and Mr. Alison was in the way to be respected as an excellent landlord and improver. People were calling on us, and we were evidently being taken into our proper place. Lady Diana no longer withheld her countenance, and though she only called on me in state, she allowed Viola to write plenty of notes to me.

But I must go on to that day when Harold and Eustace were to have a hunting day with the Foling hounds, and dine afterwards with some of the members of the hunt at the Fox Hotel at Foling, a favourite meet. They were to sleep at Biston, and I saw nothing of them the next day till Eustace came home alone, only just in time for a late dinner, and growled out rather crossly that Harold had chosen to walk home, and not to be waited for. Eustace himself was out of sorts and tired, eating little and hardly vouchsafing a word, except to grumble at us and the food, and though we heard Harold come in about

nine o'clock, he did not come in, but went up to his room.

Eustace was himself again the next morning, but Harold was 'gone out. However, as, since he had been agent, he had often been out and busy long before breakfast, this would not have been remarkable, but that Eustace was ill at ease, and at last said, "The fact is, Lucy, he has been 'screwed' again, and has not got over it."

I was so innocent that only Dora's passion with her brother revealed to me his meaning, and then I was inexpressibly horrified and angry, for I did not think Harold could have broken his own word or the faith on which I had taken up my abode with them, and the disappointment in him, embittered, I fear, by the sense of personal injury, was almost unbearable.

Eustace muttered something in excuse which I could not understand, and I thought was only laxity on his part. I told him that, if such things were to happen, his house was no home for me. And he began, "Come now, Lucy, I say, that's

hard, when 'twas Harold, and not me, and all those fellows—”

“What fellows?”

“Oh, Malvoisin and Nussy Horsman, you know.”

I knew they were the evil geniuses of Dermot's life. Lord Malvoisin had been his first tempter as boys at their tutors, and again in the Guards; and Ernest, or Nussy, Horsman was the *mauvais sujet* of the family, who never was heard of without some disgraceful story. And Dermot had led my boys among these. All that had brightened life so much to me had suddenly vanished.

It was Ash Wednesday, and I am afraid I went through my Lenten services in the spirit of the elder son, nursing my virtuous indignation, and dwelling chiefly on what would become of me if Arghouse were to be made uninhabitable, as I foresaw.

I was ashamed to consult Miss Woolmer, and spent the afternoon in restless attempts to settle to something, but feeling as if nothing

were worth while, not even attending to Dora, since my faith in Harold had given way, and he had broken his word and returned to his vice.

Should I go to church again, and spare myself the meeting him at dinner? I was just considering, when Mr. George Yolland came limping up the drive, and the sight was the first shock to the selfish side of my grief. "Is anything the matter?" I asked, trying to speak sternly, but my heart thumping terribly.

"No—yes—not exactly," he said hastily; "but can you come, Miss Alison? I believe you are the only person who can be of use."

"Then is he ill?" I asked, still coldly, not being quite sure whether I ought to forgive.

"Not bodily, but his despair over what has taken place is beyond us all. He sits silent over the accounts in his room at the office; will talk to none of us. Mr. Alison has tried—I have—Ben and all of us. He never looks up but to call for soda-water. If he yields again, it will soon be acute dipsomania, and then——" he shrugged his shoulders.

"But what do you mean? What can I do?" said I, walking on by his side all the time.

"Take him home. Give him hope and motive. Get him away, at any rate, before those fellows come. Mr. Tracy was over at Mycening this morning, and said they talked of coming to sleep at the 'Boar,' for the meet to-morrow, and looking him up."

"Lord Malvoisin?" I asked.

And as I walked on, Mr. Yolland told me what I had not understood from Eustace, that there had been an outcry among the more reckless of the Foling Hunt that so good a fellow should be a teetotaller. Dermot Tracy had been defied into betting upon the resolute abstinence of his hero—nay, perhaps the truth was that these men had felt that their victim was being attracted from their grasp, and a Satanic instinct made them strive to degrade his idol in his eyes.

So advantage was taken of the Australian's ignorance of the names of liqueurs. Perhaps the wine in the soup had already caused some excite-

ment in the head—unaccustomed to any stimulant ever since the accident and illness which had rendered it inflammable to a degree no one suspected. When once the first glass was swallowed, the dreadful work was easy, resolution and judgment were obscured, and the old habits and cravings of the days when poor Harold had been a hard drinker had been revived in full force. Uproarious mirth and wild feats of strength seemed to have been the consequence, ending by provoking the interference of the police, who had locked up till the morning such of the party as could not escape. Happily, the stupefied stage had so far set in that Harold had made it no worse by offering resistance, and Dermot had managed to get the matter hushed up by the authorities at Foling. This was what he had come to say, but Harold had been very brief and harsh with him ; though he was thoroughly angered and disgusted at the conduct of his friends, and repeated, hotly, that he had been treated with treachery such as he could never forgive.

So we came to the former "Dragon's Head," where Harold had fitted up a sort of office for

himself. Mr. Yolland bade me go up alone, and persuade him to come home with me. I was in the greater fright, because of the selfishness which had mingled with the morning's indignation, but I had just presence of mind enough for an inarticulate prayer through the throbbings of my heart ere knocking, and at once entering the room where under a jet of gas, Harold sat at a desk, loaded with papers and ledgers, on which he had laid down his head. I went up to him, and laid my hand as near his brow as his position would let me. Oh, how it burnt!

He looked up with a face half haggard, half sullen with misery, and hoarsely said, "Lucy, how came you here?"

"I came in to get you to walk home with me."

"I'll get a fly for you."

(This would be going to the "Boar," the very place to meet these men.)

"Oh no! please don't. I should like the walk with you."

"I can't go home yet. I have something to do. I must make up these books."

"But why? There can't be any haste."

"Yes. I shall put them into Yolland's hands and go by the next mail."

"Harold! You promised to stay till Eustace was in good hands."

He laughed harshly. "You have learnt what my promise is worth!"

"Oh Harold! don't! You were cheated and betrayed. They took a wicked advantage of you."

"I knew what I was about," he said, with the same grim laugh at my folly. "What is a man worth who has lost his self-command?"

"He may regain it," I gasped out, for his look and manner frightened me dreadfully.

He made an inarticulate sound of scorn, but, seeing perhaps the distress in my face, he added more gently, "No, Lucy, this is really best; I am not fit to be with you. I have broken my word of honour, and lost all that these months had gained. I should only drag Eustace down if I stayed."

"Why? Oh, why? It was through their

deceit. Oh, Harry! there is not such harm done that you cannot retrieve."

"No," he said, emphatically. "Understand what you are asking. My safeguard of an unbroken word is gone! The longing for that stuff—accursed though I know it—is awakened. Nothing but shame at giving way before these poor fellows that I have preached temperance to withholds me at this very moment."

"But it *does* withhold you! Oh, Harold! You know you can be strong. You know God gives strength, if you would only try."

"I know you say so."

"Because I know it. Oh, Harold! try my way. Do ask God to give you what you want to stand up against this."

"If I did, it would not undo the past."

"Something else can do that."

He did not answer, but reached his hat, saying something again about time, and the fly. I must make another effort. "Oh, Harold! give up this! Do not be so cruel to Dora and to me. Have you made us love you better

than anybody, only to go away from us in this dreadful way, knowing it is to give yourself up to destruction? Do you want to break our hearts?"

"Me!" he said, in a dreamy way. "You don't really care for me?"

"I? Oh, Harry, when you have grown to be my brother, when you are all that I have in this world to lean on and help me, will you take yourself away?"

"It might be better for you," he said.

"But it *will* not," I said; "you will stay and go on, and God will make your strength perfect to conquer this dreadful thing too."

"You shall try it then," he said, and he began to sweep those accounts into a drawer as if he had done with them for the night, and as he brought his head within my reach, I could not but kiss his forehead as I said, "Thank you, my Harry."

He screwed his lips together, with a strange half-smile very near tears, emptied the rest of a bottle of soda-water into a tumbler, gulped it down, opened the door, turned down the gas, and

came down with me. Mr. Yolland was watching, I well knew, but he discreetly kept out of sight, and we came out into a very cold raw street, with the stars twinkling overhead, smiling at us with joy I thought, and the bells were ringing for evening service.

But our dangers were not over. We had just emerged into the main street when a dog-cart came dashing up, the two cigars in it looming red. It was pulled up. Harold's outline could be recognised in any light, but I was entirely hidden in his great shadow, and a voice called out: "Halloo, Alison, how do? A chop and claret at the 'Boar'—eh? Come along."

"Thank you," said Harold, "but I am walking home with Miss Alison—"

The two gentlemen bowed, and I bowed, and oh! how I gripped Harold's arm as I heard the reply; not openly derisive to a lady, but with a sneer in the voice, "Oh! ah! yes! But you'll come when you've seen her home. We'll send on the dog-cart for you."

"No, thank you," said Harold. His voice

sounded firm, but I felt the thrill all through the arm I clung to. "Good night."

He attempted no excuse, but strode on—I had to run to keep up with him—and they drove on by our side, and Nussy Horsman said, "A prior engagement, eh? And Miss Alison will not release you? Ladies' claims are sacred, we all know."

What possessed me I don't know, nor how I did it, but it was in the dark and I was wrought up, and I answered, "And yours can scarcely be so! So we will go on, Harold."

"A fair hit, Nussy," and there was a laugh and flourish of the whip. I was trembling, and a dark cloud had drifted up with a bitter blast, and the first hailstones were falling. The door of the church was opened for a moment, showing bright light from within; the bells had ceased.

"My dear Lucy," said Harold, "you had better go in here for shelter."

"Not if you leave me! You must come with me," I said, still dreading that he would leave me in church, send a fly, and fall a victim at the

"Boar ;" and, indeed, I was shaking so, that he would not withdraw his arm, and said, soothingly, "I'm coming."

Oh ! that blessed hailstorm that drove us in ! I drew Harold into a seat by the door, keeping between him and that, that he might not escape. But I need not have feared.

Ben Yolland's voice was just beginning the Confession. If had so rarely been heard by Harold that repetition had not blunted his ears to the sound, and presently I heard a short, low, sobbing gasp, and looked round. Harold was on his knees, his hands over his face, and his breath coming short and thick as those old words spoke out that very dumb inarticulate shame, grief, and agony, that had been swelling and bursting in his heart without utterance or form—"We have erred and strayed—there is no health in us—"

We were far behind everyone else—almost in the dark. I don't think anyone knew we were there, and Harold did not stand up throughout the whole service, but kept his hands locked over his brow, and knelt on. Perhaps he heard little

more, from the ringing of those words in his ears, for he moved no more, nor looked up, through prayers or psalms, or anything else, until the brief ceremony was entirely over, and I touched him; and then he looked up, and his eyes were swimming and streaming with tears.

We came to the door as if he was in a dream, and there a bitterly cold blast met us, though the rain had ceased. I was not clad for a night walk. Harold again proposed fetching a carriage from the "Boar," but I cried out against that—"I would much, much rather walk with him. It was fine now."

So we went the length of the street, and just then down came the blast on us; oh! such a hurricane, bringing another hailstorm on its wings, and sweeping along, so that I could hardly have stood but for Harold's arm; and after a minute or two of labouring on, he lifted me up in his arms, and bore me along as if I had been a baby. Oh! I remember nothing so comfortable as that sensation after the breathless encounter with the storm. It always comes back to me when

I hear the words, "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the tempest, a covert from the wind."

He did not set me down till we were at the front door. We were both wet through, cold, and spent, and it was past nine, so long as it had taken him to labour on in the tempest. Eustace came out grumbling in his petulant way at our absence from dinner. I don't think either of us could bear it just then: Harold went up to his room without a word; I stayed to tell that he had seen me home from church, and say a little about the fearful weather, and then ran up myself, to give orders, as Mr. Yolland had advised me, that some strong hot coffee should be taken at once to Harold's room.

I thought it would be besetting him to go and see after him myself, but I let Dora knock at his door, and heard he had gone to bed. To me it was a long night of tossing and half-sleep, hearing the wild stormy wind, and dreaming of strange things, praying all the time that the noble soul might be won for God at last, and almost feeling, like the Iclander during the conversion of his

country, the struggle between the dark spirits and the white.

I had caught a heavy cold, and should have stayed in bed had I not been far too anxious ; and I am glad I did not, for I had not been many minutes in my sitting-room before there was a knock at the door, and Harold came in, and what he said was, "Lucy, how does one pray?"

Poor boys ! Their mothers, in the revulsion from all that had seemed like a system of bondage, had held lightly by their faith, and in the cares and troubles of their life had heeded little of their children's devotions, so that the practical heathenism of their home at Boola Boola had been unrelieved save by Eustace the elder, when his piety was reckoned as part of his weak, gentlemanly refinement. The dull hopeless wretchedness was no longer in Harold's face, but there was a wistful, gentle weariness, and yet rest in it, which was very touching, as he came to me with his strange sad question, "How does one pray?"

I don't know exactly how I answered it. I hardly could speak for crying, as I told him the

very same things one tells the little children, and tried to find him some book to help; but my books no more suited him than my clothes would have done, till he said, "I want what they said in church yesterday."

And as we knelt together, and I said it, the 51st Psalm came to my mind, and I went through it, oh! how differently from when I had said it the day before. "Ah!" he said at the end, "thank you."

And then he stood and looked at the picture which was as his child's to him, turned and said, "Well for him that he is out of all this!"

Presently, when I had marked a Prayer Book for him, he said, "And may I ask that the—the craving I told you of may not come on so intolerably?"

"'Ask, and it shall be given,'" I said. "It may not go at once, dear Harold. Temptation does come, but only to be conquered; and you will conquer now."

We went down to breakfast, where Eustace appeared in full hunting trim, but Harold in the

rough coat and long gaiters that meant farming work; and to Eustace's invitations to the run, he replied by saying he heard that Phil Ogden had been to ask him about some difficulty in the trenching work, and he was going to see to it. So he spent the daylight hours in one of those digging and toiling tasks of his "that three day-labourers could not end." I saw him coming home at six o'clock, clay up to the eyes, and having achieved wholesome hunger and wholesome sleepiness.

Eustace had come in cross. He had been chaffed about Harold's shirking, and being a dutiful nephew, and he did not like it at all. He thought Harold ought to have come out for his sake, and to show they did not care. "I do care," said Harold. And when Eustace, with his usual taste, mentioned that they had laughed at the poor fellow led meekly home by his aunt, Harold laid a kind hand on mine, which spoke more than words. I had reason to think that his struggle lasted some time longer, and that the enemy he had reawakened was slow of being

laid to rest, so that he was for weeks undergoing the dire conflict; but he gave as little sign as possible, and he certainly conquered.

And from that time there certainly was a change. He was not a man without God any longer. He had learnt that he could not keep himself straight, and had enough of the child-like nature to believe there was One who could. I don't mean that he came at once to be all I could have wished or figured to myself as a religious man. He went to church on Sunday morning now, chiefly, I do believe, for love of the Confession, which was the one voice for his needs; and partly, too, because I had pressed for that outward token, thinking that it would lead him on to more; but it generally seemed more weariness than profit, and he never could sit still five minutes without falling asleep, so that he missed even those sermons of Mr. Ben Yolland's that I thought must do him good.

I tried once, when, feeling how small my powers were beside his, to get him to talk to this same Mr. Yolland, whose work among the

pottery people he tried to second, but he recoiled with a tone half scorn, half reserve, which showed that he would bear no pressure in that direction. Only he came to my sitting-room every morning, as if kneeling with me a few moments, and reading a few short verses, were to be his safeguard for the day, and sometimes he would ask me a question. Much did I long for counsel in dealing with him, but I durst seek none, except once, when something Mr. Ben Yolland said about his having expressed strong affection for me, made me say, "If only I were fitter to deal with him," the answer was, "Go on as you are doing; that is better for him as yet than anything else."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHAMPION'S BELT.

AFTER all, the fates sent us a chaperon. A letter came addressed to my mother, and proved to be from the clergyman of a village in the remotest corner of Devonshire, where a cousin of my father had once been vicar. His widow, the daughter of his predecessor, had lived on there, but, owing to the misdoings of her son and the failure of a bank she was in much distress. All intercourse with the family had dropped since my father's death, but the present vicar, casting about for means of helping her, had elicited that the Arg-house family were the only relations she knew of, and had written to ask assistance for her.

"I will go and see about her," said Harold. So

he shouldered his bag, walked into Mycening, and started in the tender, the only place where he could endure railway travelling. Four days later came this note :

" Thursday.

" MY DEAR LUCY,—Send the carriage to meet Mrs. Alison at 4.40 on Saturday. Your affectionate

" H. A."

I handed the note to Eustace in amazement, but I perceived that he, like his cousin, thought it quite simple that the home of the head of the family should be a refuge for all its waifs and strays, and as I was one myself, I felt rebuked.

I went to Mycening in the carriage, and beheld Harold emerge from a first-class, extracting therefrom one basket after another, two bird-cages, a bundle, an umbrella, a parcel, a cloak, and, finally, a little panting apple-cheeked old lady. "Here's Lucy! that's right." And as both his hands were full, he honoured me with a hasty kiss on the fore-

head. "She'll take care of you, while I get the rest of it."

"But, oh!—my dear man—my pussy—and—and your wadded cloak—and, oh—my sable muff—your poor papa's present, I would not lose it for a thousand pounds!"

I found the muff, which could not easily be overlooked, for it was as big as a portmanteau, and stuffed full of sundries. "Oh dear yes, my dear, thank you, so it is; but the cat—my poor pussy. No, my dear, that's the bantams—very choice. My poor little Henry had them given to him when he was six years old—the old ones I mean—and I've never parted with them. 'Take them all,' he said—so good; but, oh dear. Tit! Tit! Tittie! He was playing with her just now. Has anyone seen a tabby cat? Bless me, there it goes! So dreadful! It takes one's breath away, and all my things. Oh! where is he?"

"All right," said Harold. "There are your boxes, and here's your cat," showing a striped head under his coat. "Now say what you want to-night, and I'll send for the rest."

She looked wildly about, uttering an incoherent inventory, which Harold cut short by handing over articles to the porter according to his own judgment, and sweeping her into the carriage, returning as I was picking up the odds and ends that had been shed on the way. "You have had a considerable charge," said I, between amusement and dismay.

"Poor old thing, comfort her! She never saw a train before, and is regularly overset."

He put me into the carriage, emptied his pockets of the cat and other trifles, and vanished in the twilight, the old lady gaspingly calling after him, and I soothing her by explaining that he always liked walking home to stretch his legs, while she hoped I was sure, and that it was not want of room. Truly a man of his size could not well have been squeezed in with her paraphernalia, but I did my best to console the old lady for the absence of her protector, and I began at last to learn, as best I could from her bewildered and entangled speech, how he had arrived, taken the whole

management of her affairs, and insisted on carrying her off; but her gratitude was strangely confused with her new railway experiences and her anxieties about her parcels. I felt as if I had drifted a little bit farther from old times, when we held our heads rather fastidiously high above "odd people."

But old Mrs. Samuel Alison *was* a lady, as even Lady Diana allowed, but of a kind nearly extinct. She had only visited London and Bath once, on her wedding tour, in the days of stage-coaches; there was provincialism in her speech, and the little she had ever been taught she had forgotten, and she was the most puzzle-headed woman I ever encountered. I do not think she ever realised that it was at Harold's own expense that her rent and other little accounts had been paid up, nor that Eustace was maintaining her. She thought herself only on a long visit, and trusted the assurances that Harold was settling everything for ever. The £30 income which remained to her out of one of £200 served for her pocket-money, and all else was provided for

her, without her precisely understanding how ; nor did she seem equal to the complications of her new home. She knew our history in a certain sort of way, but she spoke of one of us to the other as "your brother," or "your sister," and the late Mr. Sam always figured as "your poor papa." We tried at first to correct her, but never got her farther than "your poor uncle," and at last we all acquiesced except Eustace, who tried explanations with greater perseverance than effect. Her excuse always was that Harold was so exactly like her poor dear little Henry, except for his beard, that she could almost think she was speaking to him ! She was somewhat deaf, and did not like to avow it, which accounted for some of her blunders. One thing she could never understand, namely, why Harold and Eustace had never met her "poor little Henry" in Australia, which she always seemed to think about as big as the Isle of Wight. He had been last heard of at Melbourne ; and we might tell her a hundred times that she might as well wonder we had not met a man at Edinburgh ; she always recurred to "I do

so wish you had seen my poor dear little Henry!" till Harold arrived at a promise to seek out the said Henry, who, by all appearances, was an unmitigated scamp, whenever he should return to Australia.

On the whole, her presence was very good for us, if only by infusing the element of age. She liked to potter about in the morning, attending to her birds and bantams, and talking to the gardening men, weeding women, and all the people in the adjacent hamlet; and, afterwards, the fireside, with her knitting and a newspaper, sufficed her. Not the daily papers—they were far too much for her; but the weekly paper from her own town, which lasted her till a new one came, as she spelled it through, and communicated the facts and facetiæ as she thought them suited to our capacity. She was a better walker than I, and would seldom come out in the carriage, for she always caught cold when she did so. A long nap after dinner ended in her resuming her knitting quite contentedly in silence. She wanted no more, though she was pleased if any one said a few kindly

words to her. Nothing could be more inoffensive, and she gave us a centre and something needing consideration. I feared Dora might be saucy to her, but perhaps motherliness was what the wild child needed, for she drew towards her, and was softened, and even submitted to learn to knit, for the sake of the mighty labour of making a pair of socks for Harold.

The respectability her presence gave in our pew, and by our hearth, was a great comfort to our friends of all degrees. She was a very pretty old lady, with dark eyes, cheeks still rosy, lovely loose waves of short snowy curls, and a neat, active little figure, which looked well in the good black silks in which I contrived to invest her.

Good old woman, she thought us all shockingly full of worldliness, little guessing how much gaiety was due to her meek presence among us. We even gave dinner-parties in state, and what Richardson and I underwent from Eustace in preparation, no tongue can tell, nor Eustace's complacency in handing down Lady Diana!

The embargo on intercourse with Arked House

was over before Viola was taken to London to be introduced. Eustace wanted much to follow them, be at the levee, and spend the season in town. Had he not been presented at Government House, and was it not due to the Queen? Dora more practically offered to follow the example of the Siberian exile, and lay a petition for Prometesky's release at her Majesty's feet, but Harold uttered his ponderous "No" alike to both, proving, in his capacity as agent, that Eustace had nothing like the amount this year which could enable him to spend two or three months even as a single man in London society. The requisite amount, which he had ascertained, was startling, even had Eustace been likely to be frugal; nor could this year's income justify it, in spite of Boola Boola. The expense of coming into the estate, together with all the repairs and improvements, had been such that the Australian property had been needed to supplement the new. Eustace was very angry and disappointed, and grumbled vehemently. It was all Harry's fault for making him spend hundreds on his own maggots, that nobody wanted and nobody

cared about, and would be the ruin of him. Poor Bullock would have raised the sum fast enough, and thought nothing of it.

Harry never said how much of his own funds from Boola Boola had supplemented Eustace's outlay; he did not even say how much better it was to be a good landlord than a man about town; all he did was to growl forth to his spoilt child, "There'll be more forthcoming next year."

Eustace protested that he did not believe it, and Harold replied, "No legacy duty—no stock to purchase—Hydriots' dividend—"

It did not check the murmur, and Eustace sulked all the rest of the day; indeed, this has always seemed to me to have been the first little rift in his adherence to his cousin, but at that time his dependence was so absolute, and his power of separate action so small, that he submitted to the decree even while he grumbled; and when he found that Lord Erymanth viewed it as very undesirable for a young man to come up to London without either home or business,

or political views, took to himself great credit for the wise decision.

Indeed, Lord Erymanth did invite us all for a fortnight to his great old mansion in Piccadilly to see the Exhibition, and, as he solemnly told me, "to observe enough of our institutions as may prepare my young friends for future life." Even Dora was asked, by special entreaty from Viola, who undertook to look after her—rather too boldly, considering that Di—*i.e.*, Mrs. Enderby—was mistress of Viola's movements, and did not leave her much time to waste upon us.

In fact, Mrs. Enderby, though perfectly civil, was evidently hostile to us, and tried to keep her sister out of our way as much as she could, thickening engagements upon her, at which Viola made all the comical murmurs her Irish blood could prompt, but of course in vain. Eustace's great ambition was to follow her to her parties, and Lady Diana favoured him when she could; but Harold would have nothing to do with such penances. He never missed a chance of seeing Viola come down attired for them, but, as he

once said, "that was enough for him." He did not want to see her handed about and grimaced at by a lot of fine gentlemen who did not seem to think anything worth the trouble; and as to the crowd and the stifling, they made him feel ready to strike out and knock everyone down.

So much Eustace and I elicited in short sentences one day, when we were rather foolishly urging on him to let himself be taken with us to an evening party. No, he went his own way and took Dora with him, and I was quite sure that they were safe together, and that after his year's experience he was to be trusted to know where it was fitting to take her. They saw a good deal that was more entertaining than we could venture on; and, moreover, Harold improved his mind considerably in the matters of pottery, porcelain, and model lodging-houses.

Dermot was in London too, not staying with uncle or sister, for both of whom he was much too erratic, though he generally presented himself at such times as were fittest for ascertaining our movements for the 'day, when it generally

ended in his attaching himself to some of us, for Harold seemed to have passed an act of oblivion on the doings of that last unhappy meeting, and allowed himself to be taken once or twice with Eustace into Dermot's own world; but not only was he on his guard there, but he could not be roused to interest even where horseflesh was concerned. Some one said he was too great a barbarian, and so he was. His sports and revelries had been on a wilder, ruder, more violent scale, such as made these seem tame. He did not understand mere trifling for amusement's sake, still less how money could be thrown away for it and for fashion, when it was so cruelly wanted by real needs; and even Dermot was made uncomfortable by his thorough earnestness. "It won't do in 'the village' in the nineteenth century," said he to me. "It is like—who was that old fellow it was said of—a lion stalking about in a sheepfold."

"Sheep!" said I, indignantly. "I am afraid some are wolves in sheep's clothing."

Dermot shrugged his shoulders and said, "How is one to help oneself if one has been born some

two thousand years too late, or not in the new half-baked hemisphere where demigods still walk the earth in their simplicity?"

"I want you not to spoil the demigod when he has walked in among you."

"I envy him too much to do that," said Dermot with a sigh.

"I believe you, Dermot, but don't take him among those who want to do so."

"That's your faith in your demigod," said Dermot, not able to resist a little teasing; but seeing I was really pained, he added: "No, Lucy, I'll never take him again to meet Malvoisin and Nussy Horsman. In the first place, I don't know how he might treat them; and in the next, I would die sooner than give them another chance, even if *he* would. I thought the men would have been struck with him as I was; but no, it is not in them to be struck with anyone. All they think of is how to make him like themselves."

"Comus' crew!" said I. "Oh! Dermot, how can you see it and be one of them?"

"I'm not happy enough to be an outer barbarian," he said, and went his way.

There was a loan exhibition of curious old objects in plate and jewellery, to which Lady Diana took me, and where, among other things, we found a long belt crusted thickly with scales of gold, and with a sort of medal at the clasp.

"Just look here, mamma," said Viola ; "I do believe this is the archery prize."

And sure enough on the ticket was, "Belt, supposed to be of Peruvian workmanship. Taken in the Spanish Armada, 1588. Champion belt at the Northchester Archery Club. Lent by Miss Hippolyta Horsman."

Lady Diana came to look with some interest. She had never had an opportunity of examining it closely before, and she now said, "I am much inclined to believe that this is the belt that used to be an heirloom in the Jerfield family, and which ought to be in yours, Lucy."

My father's first wife had been the last of the Jerfields, and I asked eager questions. Lady Diana believed that "those unhappy young men"

had made away with all their mother's jewels, but she could tell no more, as our catastrophe had taken place while she was living at Killy Marey. Her brother, she said, could tell us more ; and so he did, enough to set Eustace on fire.

Yes, the belt had been well known. It was not taken in the Armada, but in a galleon of the Peruvian plunder by an old Jerfield, who had been one of the race of Westward Ho! heroes. The Jerfields had not been prosperous, and curious family jewels had been nearly all the portion of the lady who had married my father. The sons had claimed them, and they were divided between them, and given to the two wives ; and in the time of distress, when far too proud to accept aid from the father, as well as rather pleased at mortifying him by disposing of his family treasures, Alice and Dorothy Alison had gradually sold them off. And, once in the hands of local jewellers, it was easy for the belt to pass into becoming the prize held by the winner in the Archery Club every year. Lord Erymanth would go with Eustace the next morn-

ing to identify it ; but what would be the use of that ? Eustace at first fancied he could claim it, but soon he saw that his proposal was viewed as so foolish that he devoured it, and talked of giving an equivalent ; but, as Lord Erymanth observed, it would be very difficult to arrange this with an article of family and antiquarian value, in the hands of an archery club—an impersonal body.

“The thing would be to win it,” said Viola.
“Could not some of us?”

“Well done, little Miss Tell,” returned Dermot.
“Hippo has won that same belt these four years, to my certain knowledge, except once, when Laurie Stympson scored two more.”

“I’ll practise every day ; won’t you, Lucy ?
And then, between us, there will be two chances.”

“I am sure I am very much flattered by Miss Tracy’s kindness,” put in Eustace ; “but is the match solely between ladies ?”

No, for the last two years, after a match between ladies and between gentlemen, there had a final one taken place between the two

winners, male and female, in which Hippo had hitherto always carried off the glory and the belt. So Eustace intimated his full intention of trying for himself, endeavouring to be very polite to Viola and me, but implying that he thought himself a far surer card, boasting of his feats as a marksman in the Bush, until Dora broke in, "Why, Eustace, that was Harry; wasn't it, Harry?"

"Comme à l'ordinaire," muttered Dermot. Eustace made a little stammering about the thing being so near that no one could tell, and Dora referred again to Harold, who put her down with a muttered "Never mind" under his beard.

What was to be done with it if it were won? "Get a fac-simile made, and an appropriate inscription," recommended Lord Erymanth. "Probably they would take that willingly."

"But what would you do with it?" asked Harold. "You can't wear it."

"I tell you it is an heirloom," quoth Eustace. "Have you no feeling for an heirloom? I am

sure it was your mother who sold it away from me."

The sight of the belt, with Lord Erymanth's lecture on it, inflamed Eustace's ardour all the more, and we made extensive purchases of bows and arrows; that is to say, Eustace and I did, for Lady Diana would not permit Viola to join in the contest. She did not like the archery set, disapproved of public matches for young ladies, and did not choose her daughter to come forward in the cause. I did not fancy the matches either, and was certain that my mere home pastime had no chance with Hippo and Pippa, who had studied archery scientifically for years, and aimed at being the best lady shots in England; but Eustace would never have forgiven me if I had not done my best. So we subscribed to the Archery Club as soon as we went home; and Eustace would have had me practise with him morning, noon, and night, till I rebelled, and declared that if he knocked me up my prowess would be in vain, and that I neither could nor would shoot more than an hour and a half a day.

His ardour, however, soon turned into vituperations of the stupid sport. How could mortal man endure it? If it had been pistol or rifle-shooting now, it would have been tolerable, and he should have been sure to excel; but a great long, senseless, useless thing like an arrow was only fit for women or black fellows; the string hurt one's fingers too—always slipping off the tabs.

"No wonder, as you hold it," said Harold, who had just turned aside to watch on his way down to the potteries, and came in time to see an arrow fly into the bank a yard from the target. "Don't you see how Lucy takes it?"

I had already tried to show him, but he had pronounced mine to be the ladies' way, and preferred to act by the light of nature. Harry looked, asked a question or two, took the bow in his own hands, and with "This way, Eustace; don't you see?" had an arrow in the outer white.

"Yes," said Eustace, "of course, stupid thing, anybody can do it without any trouble."

"It is pretty work," said Harry, taking up

the third arrow, and sending it into the inner white.

"Much too easy for men," was Eustace's opinion, and he continued to despise it until, being capable of perseverance of a certain kind, and being tutored by Harold, he began to succeed in occasionally piercing the target, upon which his mind changed, and he was continually singing the praises of archery in the tone (whispered Viola) of the sparrow who killed Cock Robin with his bow and arrow!

We used to practise for an hour every afternoon, and the fascination of the sport gained upon Harold so much that he sent for a bow and arrows, and shot with us whenever he was not too busy, as, between the agency and the potteries, he often was. He did not join the club, nor come to the weekly meetings at Northchester with Eustace and me, until, after having seen a little of the shooting there, I privately hinted to him that there was not the smallest chance of the champion belt changing hands unless he took up the family cause. Whereupon, rather than that

Eustace should be disappointed, he did ask to be admitted, and came once with us to the meeting, when, to tell the truth, he did not shoot as well as usual, for—as afterwards appeared—in riding into Northchester he had stopped to help to lift up a great tree that was insecure on its timber waggon, and even his hands shook a little from the exertion. Besides, Eustace had discovered that Harold's new bow shot better than his, and had insisted on changing, and Harold had not so proved the powers of Eustace's as to cure it of its inferiority.

Eustace really came to shooting so tolerably as to make him look on the sport with complacency, and like the people he met there. All this hardly seems worth telling, but events we little thought of sprang from those archery practices. For the present we found them a great means of getting acquainted with the neighbours. I bowed now to many more people than ever I had done before, and we had come into great favour since the Hydriots had astonished the county by announcing a dividend. It was only three per cent., but that was an im-

mense advance upon nothing, and the promise of the future was great; the shares had gone up nearly to their original value in the most sanguine days; and the workmen—between prosperity, good management, the lecture-room at the “Dragon’s Head,” and the work among them done by the clerical, as well as the secular, Yolland—were, not models by any means, but far from the disorderly set they had been. They did take some pride in decent houses and well-dressed children, and Harold’s plans for the improvement of their condition were accepted as they never would have been from one whose kindly sympathy and strength of will did not take them, as it were, captive. “Among those workmen you feel that he is a born king of men,” said Ben Yolland.

And as Bullock had been bailiff as well as agent, Harry had all the home-farming matters on his hands, and attended to them like any farmer, so that it was no wonder that he gave little time to the meetings for archery practice, which involved the five miles expedition, and even to our own domestic practice, answering care-

lessly, when Eustace scolded him about letting a chance go by, and his heedlessness of the honour of the family, "Oh, I take a shot or two every morning as I go out, to keep my hand in."

"You'll get your arrows spoilt in the dew," said Eustace.

"They don't go into the dew," said Harold. And as he was always out with the lark, even Dora seldom saw this practice; but there were always new holes very near the centre of the target, which Eustace said proved how true was his own aim.

Harvest came, and in the middle of it the great archery match of the year, which was held in the beautiful grounds of Mr. Vernon, the member for Northchester, a little way from the town.

"I suppose Harry may as well go," said Eustace; "but he has not practised at all, so it will be of little avail. Now if I had not grazed my hand, I should have scored quite as much as Miss Horsman last week. It all lies in caring about it."

And severe was his lecture to Harold against

foolishly walking in and making his hand unsteady. Yet, after all, when the carriage came to the door, Harold was not to be found, though his bow and arrows were laid ready with ours to be taken. He endured no other apparatus. The inside of his fingers was like leather, and he declared that tabs and guard only hampered him. Lady Diana had yielded to her daughter's entreaties, and brought her to see the contest, though only as a spectator. As I stood shy and far from sanguine among the lady archers, I felt out of my natural place, and glad she was under her mother's wing, she looked so fair and innocent in her delicate blue and white, and was free for such sweet ardour in our cause, all the prettier and more arch because its demonstrations were kept down with the strong hand of her mother.

Hippolyta and Philippa Horsman were in tightly-made short-skirted dresses, pork-pie hats, and strong boots, all black picked out with scarlet, like Hippo's own complexion. She was tall, with a good active figure, and handsome, but she had reached the age when the colouring loses its pure

incarnadine and becomes hard and fixed, and she had a certain likeness to all those creatures whose names are compounded of tiger. But she was a good-natured being, and of late I had begun to understand better her aspirations towards *doing* and becoming something more than the mere domestic furniture kind of young lady.

Her aberrations against good taste and reticence were, I began to understand, misdirected outbreaks of the desire to be up and doing. Even now, as we ladies drew for our turn, she was saying, half sadly, "I'm tired of it all. What good comes of getting this belt over and over again? If it were rifle or pistol shooting it might be of use, but one could hardly organise a regiment of volunteers with the long bows when the invasion comes off."

Wit about the Amazonian regiment with the long bow was current all the time we ladies were shooting, and Eustace was worrying me to such a degree, that nervousness made me perform ten degrees worse than usual, but that mattered little, for Hippolyta, with another of her *cui bono* sighs, carried off the Roman mosaic

that was the ladies' prize, telling Pippa that it should be hers when the belt was won.

"Don't be too sure."

"Bosh! There's no one here who can handle a bow but Charlie Stympson. One Alison is a spoon, and the other is a giant made to be conquered. When he shot before, his arrows went right over the grounds, and stuck into a jackdaw's nest on the church tower! I can't think why he came."

"To make a feather in your cap."

"What a substantial one!"

There I escaped to a seat by Lady Diana, where Viola could expend her enthusiasm in clutches and squeezes of my hand. Eustace was by this time wrought up to such a state that he hardly knew what he was doing, and his first arrow wavered and went feebly aside. Two or three more shot, and then the tall figure came to the front; one moment, and the cry was "Gold," while Viola's clap of the hands brought on her a frown from her mother, who thought demonstrativeness improper. She had

to content herself with pinching my fingers every time one of those shafts went home to the heart of the target, and Harold stood, only too *facile princeps*, while Eustace sauntered up to us with the old story about the sun or the damp, I forget which, only it was something that had spoilt his archery.

Hippolyta was undaunted. The small target and longer range had thrown out many a competitor before now, and her not very low-pitched tone was heard observing that no dumb giant should beat her at her own tools.

Whatever had been her weariness of her successes before, it was gone now, and she shot splendidly. Never had such shooting been known in the annals of the club, and scarcely a word passed as the two went pacing between the two little targets, Harold with his calm, easy movement, business-like but without effort, and Hippolyta with excitement beginning to tell on her. Each time she passed us we saw her step more impetuous, the glow on her cheeks deeper, and at last that her eyes were full of tears; and after

that, one arrow went into the outer white, and the last even into the green ; while Harry's final shot was into that one great confluent hole that the centre of the target had become.

“Heard ye the arrow hurtle through the sky?

Heard ye the dragon monster's deathful cry?”

whispered Viola. “Mamma won't let me cheer, and I must have it out somehow.”

And as I sprang up and hurried to Harold, she came with me, taking care to cast no look behind, for fear of detaining glances ; and she put out both hands to shake his, as he stood with the smile lighting up his face as he saw the pleasure he had given ; though Eustace never came forward, unable to rejoice where he had been so palpably and publicly excelled.

Hippolyta behaved well. She came up holding out her hand, and saying, “Well, Mr. Alison, if one is to fall, it is a pleasure to have so mighty a victor. But why did you never let me see before what a Palnatoke (if I must not say Tell) I had to deal with?”

"I had no time for the practices," said Harold, puzzled as to who Palnatoke was.

"Worse and worse! You don't mean that you shoot like this without practice?"

"Lucy taught me a little."

"Well, if heaven-born archers come down on one, there's nothing for it but submitting. Robin Hood must prevail," said Hippolyta, as the belt was handed over to Harold, with a sigh that made him say in excuse, "I would not have done it, but that Eustace wanted to have it in his hands, for family reasons."

"Then let him look to it; I mean to get it again next year. And, I say, Mr. Alison, I have a right to some compensation. All you archers are coming to lunch at Therford on Thursday, if the sun shines, to be photographed, you know. Now you *must* come to breakfast, and bring your lion's skin and your bow—to be done alone. It is all the consolation I ask. Make him, Lucy. Bring him."

There was no refusing; and that was the way the photograph came to be taken. We

were reminded by a note after we went home, including in the invitation Eustace, who, after being a little sulky, had made up his mind that a long range was easier to shoot at than a short one, and so that he should have won the prize if he had had the chance; and the notion of being photographed was, of course, delightful to him.

"In what character shall you take me?" he asked of Miss Horsman, when we were going out on the lawn, and it dawned on him that Harry was to be a Hercules.

"Oh! as Adonis, of course," said Hippo.

"Or Eurystheus," whispered her sister.

Eustace did not understand, and looked pleased, saying something about a truly classical get up; but Harold muttered to me, "Aren't they making game of him?"

"They will take care not to vex him," I said.

But Harold could not overlook it, and took a dislike to the Horsmans on the spot, which all Hippolyta's genuine admiration of him could not

overcome. She knew what the work of his eighteen months in England had been, and revered him with such enthusiasm for what she called his magnificent manhood and beneficence, as was ready on the least encouragement to have become something a good deal warmer; but whatever she did served to make her distasteful to him. First, she hastily shuffled over Eustace's portrait, because, as she allowed us to hear, "he would give her no peace till he was disposed of." And then she not only tormented her passive victim a good deal in trying to arrange him as Hercules, but she forgot the woman in the artist, and tried to make him bare his neck and shoulder in a way that made him blush while he uttered his emphatic "No, no!" and Baby Jack supported him by telling her she "would only make a prize-fighter of him." Moreover, he would have stood more at ease if the whole of Therford had not been overrun with dogs. He scorned to complain, and I knew him too well to do so for him; but it was a strain on his self-command to have them all smelling about his legs, and wanting to mumble the lion

skin, especially Hippo's great bloodhound, Kirby, as big as a calf, who did once make him start by thrusting his long cold nose into his hand. Hippo laughed, but Harold could do nothing but force out a smile.

And I always saw the disgusted and bored expression most prominently in her performance, which at the best could never have given the grandeur of the *pose* she made him take, with the lion skin over his shoulder, and the arrows and bow in his hand. He muttered that a rifle would be more rational, and that he could hold it better, but withdrew the protest when he found that Hippo was ready to implore him to teach her to shoot with pistol, rifle—anything.

"Your brother can show you. You've only to fire at a mark," was all that could be got out of him.

Nor would he be entrapped into a beneficent talk. His great talent for silence served him well, and though I told him afterwards that he had not done Hippo justice—for she honestly wanted an

opening for being useful—he was not mollified. “I don’t like tongue,” was all he further said of her.

But whatever Hippo was, or whatever she did, I shall always be grateful to her for that photograph.

CHAPTER III.

DERMOT'S MARE.

ALL this time Dermot Tracy had been from home. He had not come back after the season, but had been staying with friends and going to various races, in which, as usual, he had heavy stakes. He persuaded my two nephews to meet him at Doncaster, where he ran one of the horses bred on his Irish estate, and afterwards to go and make him a visit at Killy Marey, County Kildare, where he used to stay about once a year, shooting or hunting, as the season might be, and always looking after his horses and entertaining all the squires and squireens of the neighbourhood, and many of the officers from the Curragh. The benefit of those visits was very doubtful both as to morals

and purses, and Lord Erymanth pointedly said he was sorry when he heard that Harold and Eustace were of the party.

I do not know whether Lady Diana viewed them as bad companions for her son, or her son as a bad companion for them; but she was very severe about it, and when I thought of the hunt dinner at Foling, my heart sank, even while I was indignant at any notion of distrusting Harold; and it did indeed seem to me that he had learnt where to look for strength and self-command, and that he had a real hatred and contempt of evil. Yet I should have been more entirely happy about him if he had not still held aloof from all those innermost ordinances, of which he somehow did not feel the need, or understand the full drift. Nor would he bow himself to give to any man the confidence or the influence over him he had given to an incapable girl like me. And if I should have feared for the best brought up, most religious of young men, in such scenes as I was told were apt to take place at Killy Marey, how could I not be anxious for my

nephews? But nothing ever turns out as one expects.

I was at Arked one day, and Lady Diana was telling me of the great rambling house at Killy Marey, and how, when she arrived as a bride, none of the doors would shut except two that would not open, behind one of which lived the family ghost; how the paper hung in festoons on the walls, and the chairs were of the loveliest primrose-coloured brocade; and how the green of the meadows was so wonderful, that she was always remembering it was the Emerald Isle; but how hopeless and impossible it was to get anything properly done, and how no good could be done where the Romish priests had interfered. All the old story of course. In the midst, a telegraph paper was brought to her; she turned deadly white, and bade me open it, for she could not. I knew she thought her son had met his father's fate, and expected to astonish her with the tidings that he was coming home by the next steamer, or that he had sent some game, or the like. Alas! no; the mother's foreboding had been too near the truth.

The telegram was from Eustace : "Tracy has had a bad horse accident. The doctor wishes for you."

There was nothing for it but to speed the mother and daughter on their hurried start to catch the Holyhead packet and cross that night. I went home to await in terror and trembling the despatch I might receive, and to be enlivened by Mrs. Sam Alison's cheering accounts of all the accidents she could recollect. "Horses are dangerous creatures to meddle with, and your poor papa never would let me take the reins when we kept a gig—which was when he was living, you know, my dear. 'You never can trust their heels,' he used to say; and it was only last week little Cocker was kicked off, but that was a donkey, and they were using him shamefully," &c. &c. &c. I felt as if a swarm of bees were humming in my ears, and walked about to make the suspense more tolerable, but I absolutely had no news at all till Viola's letter came. It was a long one, for she could be of no service as yet, and to write letters was at once her use and her solace.

Among the horses which Dermot's Irish agent

had been buying for training purposes was a mare, own sister to Harold's hunter—a splendid creature of three years old, of wonderful beauty, power, and speed, but with the like indomitable temper. She would suffer no living thing to approach her but one little stable-boy, and her own peculiar cat, which slept on her back, and took all sorts of liberties with her. Her value would be great if she could be trained, but the training was the problem. Harold, who, partly from early familiarity, partly from the gentleness of fearless strength, had a matchless power over horses, had made acquaintance with her one evening, had been suffered in her box, had fed her, caressed her cat, and led her round the stable-yard as a first stage in the conquest of horse by man.

In the early morning, Dermot, quite as fearless, and unwilling that anyone should do or dare more than himself, had gone alone to make the same attempt, but no sooner did the mare find him beside her, than she seized him by the shoulder with her teeth, threw him down, and kicked and trampled on him. None of the grooms could

succeed in rescuing him, and it was only when Eustace's cry had summoned Harold, that, grasping the mare's halter and forcing her back with his arm of iron, he made it possible for Eustace and a groom to drag out poor Dermot's senseless form, in a state that at first appeared to be death itself. For several days his condition was so extremely precarious, that Harold never once left him till his mother arrived, and even after that was his most effective nurse. He sent me a message, in Viola's letter, that he had not had a moment to write, and hoped I had not been too anxious.

After this, Viola wrote every day, and told of gradual improvement in her brother, and at last how he had been lifted to the sofa, and mamma hoped in a fortnight or three weeks he might be able to be taken home. By the next post came a note from Harold, saying he could be spared, and was coming home, and that very evening he walked into the house, and was welcomed by Dora with shrieks of ecstatic joy.

He said Dermot was better, but he looked

worn, and had the indefinable expression of pain which made me sure that something had gone wrong, and presently I found out that the bite in the shoulder was a very bad business, still causing much suffering, but that the most serious matter was, that a kick in the side had renewed the damage left by the old Alma bullet, and that great care would be needed all the winter. But Harold seemed more reluctant to open his mouth than ever, and only, by most diligent pumping, did Mrs. Alison get out of him what doctors they had called in, and whether they had used all the recipes for wounds and bruises that she had entrusted to me to be sent, and which had for the most part remained in my blotting-book.

The next morning, to my grief and distress, he did not come to my room, but I found he had been up and out long before it was light, and he made his appearance at eleven o'clock, saying he had promised to go and give Lord Erymanth an account of his nephew, and wanted me to come with him "to do the talking, or he

should never stand it." If I did not object to the dog-cart and Daniel O'Rourke immediately, we should be there by luncheon time. I objected to nothing that Harry drove, but all the way to Erymanth not ten words passed, and those were matters of necessity. I had come to the perception that when he did not want to speak it was better to let him take his own time.

Lord Erymanth was anxious, not only about Dermot's health, and his sister's strength and spirits, but he wanted to hear what Harold thought of the place and of the tone of the country; and, after our meal, when he grew more confidential, he elicited short plain answers full of information in short compass, and not very palatable. The estate was "not going on well." "Did Harold think well of the agent?" "He had been spoilt." "How?" "By calls for supplies." "Were the people attached to Dermot?" "To a certain degree." "Would it be safe for him to live there?" "He ought."

Lord Erymanth entirely assented to this, and we found that he had all along held that his

sister had been in error for not having remained at Killy Marey, and brought up her son to his duties as a landlord, whatever the danger; though of course she, poor thing, could hardly be expected to see it in that light. He evidently viewed this absenteeism as the cause of the wreck of Dermot's youth, and those desultory habits of self-indulgence and dissipation which were overcoming that which was good and noble in him; and the good old man showed that he blamed himself for what he had conceded to his sister in the first shock of her misfortune. Harold had told him of the warm feeling shown by the tenantry when Dermot was lying in danger of his life, and their rejoicing when he turned the corner and began to recover, and he asked anxiously whether all this affection might not awaken a responsive chord, and draw him to "what was undoubtedly his proper sphere."

"It will," said Harold.

"You think so? And there is little doubt but that your cousin's influence at such a critical period may have great effect in turning the scale?"

Harold nodded.

"More especially as, from the intelligence I have received, I have little doubt that the connection will be drawn a good deal closer before long," said Lord Erymanth with a benignant smile at us both. "I suppose we must not begin to congratulate one another yet, for I may conclude that nothing had actually taken place when you came away."

"Nothing."

"When my sister became conscious of the condition of affairs and wrote to consult me, I had no hesitation in replying that, though Viola's connections might warrant greater expectations in a worldly point of view, yet I thought that there was every reason for promoting an attachment to a gentleman of family equal to her own on one side at least, and whose noble exertions during the past two years for the welfare of all concerned with him, not only obliterate all recollection of past disadvantages, but in every way promise honour and happiness to all connected with him."

I was not a little excited, but one of the worst fits of restlessness under Lord Erymanth's harangues had come upon Harold. He only sat it out by pulling so many hairs out of his beard that they made an audible frizzle in the fire when he brushed them off his knee, and stood up, saying gruffly, "You are very good ; he deserves it. But I must get Lucy home in good time. May I go and speak to your coachman ? Tracy gave me a message for him."

Harold was off, and Lord Erymanth observed, "A very fine young man that. It is much to be regretted that he did not employ the advantages he enjoyed at Sydney as his cousin Eustace did, and left himself so rugged and unpolished."

"You must learn to like him, dear Lord Erymanth," I said. "He is all a very dear brother could be to me."

And allegiance to him kept back every word of that infinite superiority, which was never more shown than by the opinion of Eustace, which his great unselfish devotion continued, without

the least deceit, to impress on most people. Lord Erymanth rejoiced, and we agreed that it was very lucky for me that I preferred Harold, since I should have had to yield up my possession of Eustace. The old gentleman was most kind and genial, and much delighted that the old breach with the Alisons should be healed, and that his niece should make a marriage which he greatly preferred to her sister's, and together we sung the praises of our dear Viola, where we had no difference of opinion.

Harold only came back when the carriage came round, and no sooner had we driven off than I broke out—"Harry, I had no notion matters had gone so far. Fancy, Lady Diana consulting her brother! It must be very near a crisis. I can't think why you did not stay to see it."

"Because I am a fool."

The horse flew on till we were nearly out at the park-gates, and a bewildered sense of his meaning was coming before me. "You wished it," said I rather foolishly.

"I did. I do. Only I don't want to see it."

"My poor dear Harold!"

"Pshaw!"—the sound was like a wild beast's, and made the horse plunge—"I shall get over it." Then, presently, in a more natural voice, "I must go out again in the spring. There are things to be looked to at Boola Boola for both of us. I shall only wait till Tracy is well enough to go with me."

"He! Dermot Tracy?"

"Yes. It will be the best way to break out of the old lines."

"I can fancy that. Oh, Harold! are you going to save him? That will be the most blessed work of all!" I cried, for somehow a feeling like an air of hope and joy came over me.

"I don't know about that," said he, in a smothered tone; but it was getting dark enough to loose his tongue, and when I asked, "Was it his illness that made him wish it?" he answered, "It was coming before. Lucy, those horses have done worse for him than that wound in his shoulder. They had almost eaten the very heart out of him!"

"His substance I know they have," I said ;
"but not his good warm heart."

"You would say so if you saw the poor wretches on his property," said Harold. "The hovels in the Alfy Valley were palaces compared with the cabins. Such misery I never saw. They say it is better since the famine. What must it have been then ? And he thinking only how much his agent could squeeze from them !"

I could only say he had been bred up in neglect of them, and to think them impracticable, priest-ridden traitors and murderers. Yes, Lady Diana had said some of this to Harold already. It was true that they had shot Mr. Tracy, but Harold had learnt that after a wild, reckless, spendthrift youth, he had become a Protestant and a violent Orangeman in the hottest days of party strife, so that he had incurred a special hatred, which, as far as Harold could see, was not extended to the son, little as he did for his tenants but show them his careless, gracious countenance from time to time.

Yet peril for the sake of duty would, as all

saw now, have been far better for Dermot than the alienation from all such calls in which his mother had brought him up. When her religious influence failed with him, there was no other restraint. Since he had left the army, he had been drawn, by those evil geniuses of his, deep into speculations in training horses for the turf, and his affairs had come into a frightful state of entanglement, his venture at Doncaster had been unsuccessful, and plunged him deeper into his difficulties, and then (as I came to know) Harold's absolute startled amazement how any living man could screw and starve men, women, and children for the sake of horseflesh, and his utter contempt for such diversions as he had been shown at the races, compared with the pleasure of making human beings happy and improving one's land, had opened Dermot's eyes with very few words.

The thought was not new when the danger of death made him look back on those wasted years; and resolution began with the dawning of convalescence, that if he could only free him-

self from his entanglements—and terrible complications they were—he would begin a new life, worthy of having been given back to him. In many a midnight watch he had spoken of these things, and Harold had soothed him by a promise to use that accountant's head of his in seeing how to free him as soon as he was well enough. Biston and the horses would be sold, and he could turn his mind to his Irish tenants, who, as he already saw, loved him far better than he deserved. He caught eagerly at the idea of going out to Australia with Harold, and it did indeed seem that my brave-hearted nephew was effecting a far greater deliverance for him than that from the teeth and hoofs of wicked Sheelah.

"But you will not stay, Harold? You will come home?" I said.

"I mean it," he answered.

"Then I don't so much mind," said I, with infinite relief; and he added, thinking that I wanted further reassurance, that he should never give up trying to get Prometesky's pardon; and that this was only a journey for supplies, and to see his old

friend, and perhaps to try whether anything could be done about that other unhappy Harry. I pressed him to promise me that he would return and settle here, but though he said he would come back, to settling at home he answered, "That depends;" and though I could not see, I knew he was biting his moustache, and guessed, poor dear fellow, that it depended on how far he should be able to endure the sight of Eustace and Viola married. I saw now that I had been blind not to perceive before that his heart had been going out to Viola all this time, while he thought he was courting her for Eustace, and I also had my thoughts about Viola, which made it no very great surprise to me, when, in a few days more, intelligence came that Eustace might be expected at home, and he made his appearance in a petulant though still conceited mood, that made me suspect his wooing had not been prosperous, though I knew nothing till Harold told me that he was not out of heart, though Viola had cut him short and refused to listen to him, for her mother said she was a mere child who was taken

by surprise, and that if he were patient and returned to the charge she would 'know her own mind better.

Harold was certainly more exhilarated than he chose to avow to himself on this discovery, and the next week came a letter from Lady Diana, and a short note from Dermot himself, both saying he had not been so well, and begging Harold to come and assist in the removal, since Dermot protested that otherwise he could not bear the journey, and his mother declared that she should be afraid to think of it for him.

Viola's hitherto constant correspondence had ceased ; I drew my own auguries, but I had to keep them to myself, for Harold started off the next day in renewed spirits, and I had Eustace on my hands in a very strange state, not choosing or deigning to suppose himself rejected, and yet exceedingly angry with all young ladies for their silliness and caprices, while he lauded Lady Diana up to the skies, and abused Dermot, who, I think, had laughed at him visibly enough to be at least

suspected by himself. And, oddly enough, Dora was equally cross, and had a fit of untowardness unequalled since the combats at her first arrival, till I was almost provoked into acquiescence in Eustace's threat of sending her to school.

The journey was at last accomplished ; Harold only parted with the Tracys at Arked House, after having helped to carry Dermot to the room that had been prepared for him on the ground-floor.

I rode over the next afternoon to inquire, and was delighted to meet Viola close within the gate. We sent away my horse, and she drew me into her favourite path while answering my questions that Dermot had had a good night and was getting up ; I should find him in the drawing-room if I waited a little while. She could have me all to herself, for mamma was closeted with Uncle Ery, talking over *things*—and on some word or sound of mine betraying that I guessed what things, it broke out.

“How could you let him do it, Lucy? You, at least, must have known better.”

"My dear, how could I have stopped him, with all St. George's Channel between us?"

"Well, at any rate, you might persuade them all to have a little sense, and not treat me as if I was one of the elegant females in 'Pride and Prejudice,' who only refuse for fun! Is not that enough to drive one frantic, Lucy? Can't you at least persuade the man himself?"

"Only one person can do that, Viola."

"But I can't! That's the horrid part of it. I can't get rid of it. Mamma says I am a foolish child. I could tell her of other people more foolish than I am. I can see the difference between sham and reality, if they can't."

"I don't think he means to be sham," I rambled into defence of Eustace.

"Means it! No, he hasn't the sense. I believe he really thinks it was he who saved Dermot's life as entirely as mamma does."

"No. Now do they really?"

"Of course, as they do with everything. It's always 'The page slew the boar, the peer had the gloire.'"

"It's the page's own fault," I said. "He only wants the peer to have the gloire."

"And very disagreeable and deceitful it is of him," cried Viola; "only he hasn't got a scrap of deceit in him, and that's the reason he does it so naturally. No, you may tell them that borrowed plumes won't always serve, and there are things that can't be done by deputy."

And therewith Viola, perhaps perceiving what she had betrayed, turned more crimson than ever, and hid her face against me with a sob in her breath, and then I was quite sure of what I did not dare to express, further than by saying, while I caressed her, "I believe they honestly think it is all the same."

"But it isn't," said Viola, recovering, and trying to talk and laugh off her confusion. "I don't think so, and poor Dermot did not find it so when the wrong one was left to lift him, and just ran his great stupid arm into the tenderest place in his side, and always stepped on all the boards that creak, and upset the table of physic bottles, and then said it was Harold's way of

propping them up! And that's the creature they expect me to believe in!"

We turned at the moment and saw a handkerchief beckoning to us from the window; and going in, found Dermot established on a couch under it, and Harold packing him up in rugs, a sight that amazed both of us; but Dermot said, "Yes, he treats me like Miss Stympson's dog, you see. Comes over by stealth when I want him."

Dermot did look very ill and pain-worn, and his left arm lay useless across him, but there was a kind of light about his eyes that I had not seen for a long time, as he made Harold set a chair for me close to him, and he and Viola told the adventures of their journey, with mirth in their own style, and Harold stood leaning against the shutter with his look of perfect present content, as if basking in sunshine while it lasted.

When the mother and uncle came in, it was manifestly time for us to convey ourselves away. Harold had come on foot from Mycening, but I was only too glad to walk my pony along the

lanes, and have his company in the gathering winter twilight.

"You have spoken to her?" he said.

"Yes. Harold, it is of no use. She will never have him."

"Her mother thinks she will."

"Her mother knows what is in Viola no more than she knows what is in that star. Has Dermot never said anything——"

"Lady Diana made everyone promise not to say a word to him."

"Oh!"

"But, Lucy, what hinders it? There's nothing else in the way, is there?"

I did not speak the word, but made a gesture of assent.

"May I know who it is," said Harold in a voice of pain. "Our poor fellow shall never hear."

"Harold," said I, "are you really so ridiculous as to think any girl could care for Eustace while you are by?"

"Don't!" cried Harold, with a sound as of far more pain than gladness.

"But why not, Harry? You asked me."

"Don't light up what I have been struggling to quench ever since I knew it."

"Why?" I went on. "You need not hold back on Eustace's account. I am quite sure nothing would make her accept him, and I am equally convinced——"

"Hush, Lucy!" he said in a scarcely audible voice. "It is profanation. Remember——"

"But all that is over," I said. "Things that happened when you were a mere boy, and knew no better, do not seem to belong to you now."

"Sometimes they do not," he said sadly; "but——"

"What is repented," I began, but he interrupted.

"The fact is not changed. It is not fit that the purest, gentlest, brightest creature made by Heaven should be named in the same day with one stained with blood—aye, and deeds I could not speak of to you."

I could not keep from crying as I said, "If I love you the more, Harry, would not she?"

"See here, Lucy," said Harry, standing still with his hand on my rein; "you don't know what you do in trying to inflame what I can hardly keep down. The sweet little thing may have a fancy for me because I'm the biggest fellow she knows, and have done a thing or two; but what I am she knows less than even you do; and would it not be a wicked shame either to gain the tender heart in ignorance, or to thrust on it the knowledge and the pain of such a past as mine?" And his groan was very heavy, so that I cried out:

"Oh, Harry! this is dreadful. Do you give up all hope and joy for ever because of what you did as an ungovernable boy left to yourself?"

We went on for some time in silence; then he said in an indescribable tone, between wonder, disgust, and pity, "And I thought I loved Meg Cree!"

"You knew no one else," I said, feeling as if, when Dora threw away that ring, the wild, passionate animal man had been exorcised; but all the answer I had was another groan, as from the burthened breast, as if he felt it almost an outrage to one whom he so revered to transfer to

her the heart that had once beat for Meg Cree. There was no more speech for a long time, during which I feared that I had merely made him unhappy by communicating my conjecture, but just as we were reaching our own grounds he said, "You will say nothing, Lucy?"

"No, indeed."

"I thought it was all over, and for ever," he said, pausing; "it ought to have been. But the gates of a new world were opened to me when I saw her and you walking in the garden! If it had only been five or six years sooner!"

He could not say any more, for Dora, who had been watching, here burst on us with cries of welcome, and it was long before there was any renewal of the conversation, so that I could not tell whether he really persuaded himself that he had no hopes, or was waiting to see how matters should turn out.

It was never easy to detect expressions of feeling or spirits on his massive face, and he could hardly be more silent than usual; but it was noticeable that he never fell asleep after his former

wont when sitting still. Indeed, he seldom was still, for he had a great deal of business both for the estate and the potteries on his hands, and stayed up late at night over them; and not only over them, for my room was next to his, and I heard the regular tramp, tramp of his feet, and the turn at the end of the room, as he walked up and down for at least an hour when the rest of the house were asleep, or the closing of the door when he returned from wandering on the moor at night. And in the early morning, long before light, he always walked or rode over to Arked House, bestowed on Dermot's hurts the cares which both had come to look on as essential, and stayed with him till the family were nearly ready to appear at their nine o'clock breakfast, not seeing Viola at all, unless any special cause led to a meeting later in the day, and then his eyes glowed, and he would do her devoted, unobserved service—no, not unobserved by her, whom it made blush and sparkle—and utter little words of thanks, not so gay as of old, but deeper, as if for a great honour and delight. And then he would bow his head,

colour, and draw into the background, where, with folded arms, he could watch her.

Once, when Dora, in her old way, claimed to be his wife, Harold told her with some impatience that she was growing too old for that nonsense. The child looked at him with bent brows and questioning eyes for a moment, then turned and fled. An hour later, after a long search, I found her crouched up in the corner of the kangaroo's stall among the straw, having cried herself to sleep, with her head on the creature's soft back.

As soon as Dermot was able to bear any strain on mind or attention, he gave his keys to Harold. All his long and unhappy accumulation of bills and bonds were routed out from their receptacles at Biston, and brought over by Harold to his office, where he sorted them, and made them intelligible, before harassing his friend with the questions he alone could explain. An hour a day was then spent over them—hours that cost poor Dermot more than he was equal to; but his mind was made up, as he told me, "to face anything rather than go on in the old miserable way."

It was much that he had learnt to think it miserable.

Lady Diana was not much obliged to Harold. She could not think why her patient was so often left out of spirits, and with a headache after those visits, while he was in a feverish state of anxiety about them, that made it worse to put them off than to go through with them ; and then, when she had found out the cause, the family pride much disliked letting an outsider into his involvements, and she thought their solicitor would have done the thing much better.

Poor woman, it was hard that, when she thought illness was bringing her son back to her, she found his confidence absorbed by the "bush-ranger," whom she never liked nor trusted, and his reformation, if reformation it were to prove, not at all conducted on her views of visible repentance and conversion. Dermot was responsive to her awakened tenderness, but he was perversely reticent as to whether repentance or expedience prompted him. She required so much religious demonstration, that she made

him shrink from manifesting his real feelings as "humbug," and Viola knew far more that his repentance was real than she did. Those proofs of true repentance—confession and restitution—I am sure he gave, and that most bravely, when, after weeks of weary and sorrowful work on Harold's part and his, the whole was sufficiently disentangled to make a lucid statement of his affairs.

He made up his mind to make an arrangement with his creditors, giving up Biston, all his horses—everything, in fact, but Killy Marey, which was entailed on his Tracy cousins. And this second year of George Yolland's management had made the shares in the Hydriot Company of so much value, that the sale of them would complete the clearance of his obligations. The full schedule of his debts, without reserve, and the estimate of his means of paying them off, was then given by Dermot to his mother, and sent to his uncle, who went over them with his solicitor.

Lady Diana writhed under the notion of

selling Biston. It seemed to her to be the means of keeping her son from the place in Ireland, which she disliked more than ever, and she hoped her brother would advance enough to prevent this from being needful; but for this Lord Erymanth was far too wise. He said, as Dermot felt, that Biston had never been anything but an unjustifiable and pernicious luxury and temptation; but he did voluntarily, since it joined his property, propose to purchase it himself, and at such a sum as secured the possibility of a real payment of the debts when the other sales should have been effected.

And they were carried out. It was well for Dermot that, as a convalescent in his mother's house, he was sheltered from all counter influences, such as his easy good nature might not have withstood; and under that shelter it was his purpose to abide until the voyage which would take him out of reach for a time, and bring him home ready for his fresh start.

Of course Lady Diana hated the notion of the voyage, and though her brother advised her not

to oppose it, yet to the last I think she entertained hopes that it would end in Harold's going alone.

When Harold came in and told me that Dermot Tracy's horses, English and Irish, were all sold, and named the sum that they had realised, my spirits leaped up, and I was certain, after such a voluntary sacrifice, the dear old companion of my childhood would be a joy and exultation to us all, instead of a sorrow and a grief.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED VALLEY CATTLE STEALERS.

IN the Easter recess our Northchester member had his house full, and among his guests was one of the most influential men of the day, who, though not a cabinet minister himself, was known to have immense influence with Government and in Parliament, from his great weight and character.

Eustace and I were invited to meet him, also Lady Diana and her daughter and son, who was called well now, though far from strong. When the gentlemen came out of the dining-room, Eustace and Dermot came up to us, the former much excited, and saying, "Lucy, you must make preparations. They are all coming to luncheon to-morrow at Arghouse."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Sir James (the great man himself), and Mr. Vernon, and the General, and all the party. I asked them all. Sir James has heard of the potteries, and of my system, and of the reformation I have effected, and there being no strikes, and no nothing deleterious—undesirable I mean—and the mechanics having an interest, he wants to see for himself—to inspect personally—that he may name it in Parliament in illustration of a scheme he is about to propose. So Mr. Vernon will bring him over to see the Hydriot works to-morrow, and I have asked them to luncheon. Only think—named in Parliament! Don't you think now it might lead to a baronetcy, Tracy?"

"Or a peerage," quoth naughty Viola, out of reach of mother or Harold. "My Lord Hardbake would be a sweet title."

"I should revive the old honours of the family," said Eustace, not catching the bit of wickedness. "Calldron of Arghouse was an old barony. Lord Calldron of Arghouse! Should you object, Miss Tracy?"

"Earthen pot or copper kettle? Which?" laughed Viola. "Ah! there's Miss Vernon going to sing. I want to hear her," and she jumped up. "Sit down, Dermot, in my place; you are not to stand."

She threaded her way to the piano, followed by Eustace, who still viewed himself as her suitor.

"Poor little Vi!" said Dermot, who by this time was aware of the courtship, and regarded it with little favour.

"She will rub him off more easily among numbers," I said, as he settled down by me. "But is this really so, Dermot?"

"What, is she to be my Lady Calldron? I am afraid my hopes of that elevation are not high. But as to the luncheon, you will really have to slaughter your turkeys, and declare war on your surviving cocks and hens. He has been inviting right and left. And tell Harold from me that if he votes the thing a bore, and keeps out of the way for fear of having to open his mouth, he'll be doing serious damage. If respect to the future baronetcy makes him get into the back-

ground, tell him, with my compliments, the whole thing will be a muddle, and I'll never speak a good word for him again."

"Then you have been speaking good words?"

"When Sir James began to inquire about the Hydriots, Mr. Alison was called on to answer him, and you are aware that, except to certain constitutions of intellect, as my uncle would say, certain animals cannot open their mouths without proclaiming themselves. The most sensible thing he said was the invite to come and see. Really, he made such mulls with the details that even I had to set him right, and that led to Sir James talking it out with me, when I had the opportunity of mentioning that a certain person, not the smallest of mankind, had been entirely overlooked. Yes I did, Lucy. I up and told him how our friend came over as heir; and when he was done out of it, set to work as agent and manager and improver-general, without a notion of jealousy or anything but being a backbone to this cousin of his, and I could not say what besides to all that came in his way; but I flatter

myself there's one man in the room who has some notion of the difference there is between the greater and the less."

"Harold would not thank you," I said.

"Not he. So much the more reason that you should take care he comes to the front."

Dermot did Eustace a little injustice in fancying he wanted to suppress Harold. He never did. He was far too well satisfied with his own great personality to think that anyone could interfere with it; and having asked everyone in the room, ladies and all, to the inspection and the luncheon, discoursed to me about it all the way home, and would almost have made me and all the servants stay up all night to prepare. Harold, who was still up when we came home, received the tidings equably, only saying he would go down to Yolland the first thing in the morning and get things made tidy. "And don't bother Lucy," he added, as we went upstairs.

Well, the supplies were contrived, and the table laid without anyone being quite distracted. From Richardson downwards, we all had

learnt to take our own way, while the master talked, and Mrs. Alison was really very happy, making delicate biscuits after a receipt of her own. Things came to a point where I was sure they would finish themselves off more happily without either of us, and though one idle female more might not be desirable, I thought at least I might prevent Harold's effacement, and went down to Mycening with Eustace to receive the guests.

Sure enough, Harold was not in the entrance yard, nor the superintendent's office. Mr. Yolland was there, looking grim and bored, and on inquiry being made, said that Mr. Harold had insisted on his being on the spot, but was himself helping the men to clear the space whence it would be easiest to see the action of the machinery. I made a rush after him, and found him all over dust, dragging a huge crate into a corner, and to my entreaty he merely replied, pushing back his straw hat, "I must see to this, or we shall have everything smashed."

The carriages were coming, and I could only

pick my way back by the shortest route, through stacks of drain-tiles and columns of garden-pots, to Eustace, who, becoming afraid it would seem as if he were keeping shop, was squeezing down the fingers of his left-hand glove, while impressing on Mr. Yolland and me that everyone must understand he was only there as chairman of the directors.

The people came, and were conducted round, and peeped about and made all sorts of remarks, wise and foolish. Eustace was somewhat perplexed between the needful attentions to Mrs. Vernon and to Sir James, who, being much more interested in the men than the manufacture, was examining Mr. Yolland on their welfare, spirit, content, &c.; and George Yolland might be trusted for making Mr. Harold Alison the prominent figure in his replies, till at last he could say, "But here is Mr. Harold Alison, Sir James. He can reply better than I." (Which was not strictly true, for George Yolland had by far the readiest tongue.) But he had managed to catch Harold in the great court, moving back one of

his biggest barrels of heavy ingredients, with face some degrees redder and garments some degrees dustier than when I had seen him ten minutes before. It really was not on purpose, or from any wish to hide, but the place needed clearing, there was little time, and his strength could not be spared.

I am sorry to say that a chattering young lady, who stood close to Eustace, exclaimed, "Dear me, what a handsome young foreman!" making Eustace blush to the eyes, and say, "It is my cousin—he is so very eccentric—you'll excuse him."

Sir James, meantime, had heartily shaken the hand which, though begrimed at the moment, Harold held out to him, and plunged into inquiries at once, not letting him go again; for Harold, with the intuition that nothing was idly asked, and that each observation told, answered to the point as no man could do better, or in fewer words. When the round was over, and Eustace was prepared with the carriage to drive the grandees the mile up to Arghouse, Sir James

returned his thanks, but he was going to walk up with Mr. Harold Alison, who was going to show him his workmen's reading-room, cottages, &c. Eustace looked about for someone to whom to resign the reins, but in vain, and we all had to set off, my housewifely mind regretting that time and Eustace had combined to make the luncheon a hot instead of a cold one.

We found the Tracys when we arrived at home. Dermot was not equal to standing about at the pottery, but Lady Diana had promised to come and help me entertain the party, and very kindly she did so during the very trying hungry hour to which we had to submit, inasmuch as, when Sir James at last appeared, it turned out that he never ate luncheon, and was in perfect ignorance that we were waiting for him.

He offered me his arm and we went to the long-deferred luncheon. I listened to his great satisfaction with what he had seen, and the marvel he thought it ; and meanwhile I looked for Harold, and saw him presently come in, in exactly that condition of dress as he considered due to me,

and with the long blue envelope I knew full well in one hand, in the other the little figure of the Hope of Poland which Miss Woolmer had given him; and oh! what a gladness there was in his eyes. He put them both down beside Sir James, and then retreated to a side table, where Dora had been set to entertain a stray school-boy or two.

I longed to hear Sir James's observations, but his provoking opposite neighbour began to talk, and I got nothing more to myself, and I had to spend the next half-hour in showing our grounds to Mrs. Vernon, who admired as if she were electioneering, and hindered me from knowing what anybody was about, till the people had had their cups of coffee and their carriages had come.

We three found ourselves in the porch together when Eustace had handed in Mrs. Vernon, and Sir James, turning for a last shake of Harold's hand, said, "I shall expect you this day week." Then, with most polite thanks to the master of the house, he was driven off, while Harold, beaming down on us, exclaimed, "It is as good

as done. I am to go up and see the Secretary of State about it next week."

I had no doubt what *it* was, and cried out joyfully to ask how he had done it. "I told him who first discovered the capabilities of the clay, and laid the state of the case before him. He was very much touched, said it was just such a matter as needed severity at the time, but was sure to be pardoned now."

"Pardoned! What do you mean?" exclaimed Eustace. "You don't mean that you have not done with that wretched old Prometesky yet? I thought at least, when you took up Sir James all to yourself, spoiling the luncheon and keeping everyone waiting, you were doing something for the benefit of the family."

As Harold seemed dumb with amazement, I asked what he could possibly have been expected to do for the good of the family, and Eustace mumbled out something about that supposed Calldron barony, which seemed to have turned his head, and I answered sharply that Sir James had nothing at all to do

with reviving peerages; besides, if this one had ever existed, it would have been Harold's. I had much better have held my tongue. Eustace never recovered that allegation. That day, too, was the very first in which it had been impossible for Harold to avoid receiving marked preference, and the jealousy hitherto averted by Eustace's incredible vanity had begun to awaken. Moreover, that there had been some marked rebuff from Viola was also plain, for, as the Arked carriage was seen coming round, and I said we must go in to the Tracys, Eustace muttered, "Nasty little stuck-up thing; catch me making up to her again!"

It was just as well that Harold did not hear, having, at sight of the carriage, gone off to fetch a favourite cup, the mending of which he had contrived for Viola at the potteries. When we came into the drawing-room, I found Lady Diana and Mrs. Alison with their heads very close together over some samples of Welsh wool, and Dermot lying on the sofa, his hands clasped behind his head, and his sister hanging

over him, with her cheeks of the colour that made her beautiful.

The two elder ladies closed on Eustace directly to congratulate him on the success of his arrangements, and Dermot jumped up from the sofa, while Viola caught hold of my hand, and we all made for the window which opened on the terrace. "Tell her," said Viola to her brother, as we stood outside.

Dermot smiled, saying, "Only that Sir James thinks he has to-day seen one of the most remarkable men he ever met in his life."

"And he has promised to help him to Prometheus's pardon," I said; while Viola, instead of speaking, leaped up and kissed me for joy. "He is to go to London about it."

"Yes," Dermot said. "Sir James wants him to meet some friends, who will be glad to pick his brains about New South Wales. Hallo, Harry! I congratulate you. You've achieved greatness."

"You've achieved a better thing," said Viola, with her eyes beaming upon him.

"I hope so," he said in an under tone.

"I am so glad," with a whole heart in the four words.

"Thank you," he said. "This was all that was wanting."

The words must have come out in spite of himself, for he coloured up to the roots of his hair as they ended. And Viola not only coloured too, but the moisture sprang into her fawn-like eyes. Dermot and I looked at each other, both knowing what it meant.

That instant Lady Diana called, and Dermot, the first of all, stooped under the window to give his sister time, and in the little bustle to which he amiably submitted about wraps and a glass of wine, Lady Diana failed to look at her daughter's cheeks and eyes. Viola never even thanked Harold for the cup, which he put into her lap after she was seated beside Dermot's feet on the back seat of the carriage. She only bent her head under her broad hat, and there was a clasp of the two hands.

I turned to go up to my sitting-room. Harold came after me and shut the door.

"Lucy," he said, "may one give thanks for such things?"

The words of the 107th Psalm came to my lips: "Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men."

He put his hands over his face, and said presently, in a smothered voice, "I had just begun to pray for the old man."

I could not say any more for happy tears, less for "the captive exile" than for my own Harry.

Soon he looked up again, and said with a smile, "I shan't fight against it any longer."

"I don't think it is of any use," was my answer, as if pretending to condole; and where another man would have uttered a fervent rhapsody, he exclaimed, "Lovely little darling!"

But after another interval he said, "I don't mean to speak of it till I come back." And on my question, "From London?" "No, from Boola Boola."

He had evidently debated the whole matter

during his midnight tramps, and had made up his mind, as he explained, that it would be cruel to Viola to touch the chord which would disclose her feelings to herself. She was a mere child, and if her fancy were touched, as he scarcely allowed himself to believe, it was hard to lay fully before her those dark pages in his history which she must know before she could be allowed to give herself to him. Besides, her mother and uncle would, even if there were nothing else amiss, be sure to oppose a match with one who had nothing in England but his cousin's agency and a few shares in the potteries; and though Harold had plenty of wealth at Boola Boola, it was certain that he should not have a moment's audience from the elders unless he could show its amount in property in England. If things went well, he would buy a piece of Neme Heath, reclaim it, and build a house on it; or, perhaps, an estate in Ireland, near Killy Marey, where the people had gained his heart. Till, however, he could show that he had handsome means in a form tangible to Lady Diana, to

express his affection would only be exposing Viola to displeasure and persecution. Moreover, he added, his character was not cleared up as much as was even possible. He had told Lord Erymanth the entire truth, and had been believed, but it was quite probable that even that truth might divide for ever between him and Viola, and those other stories of the Stympsons both cousins had, of course, flatly denied, but had never been able otherwise to confute.

I asked whether it had ever struck him that it was possible that the deeds of Henry Alison might have been charged on his head. "Yes," he said, and he thought that if he could trace this out, with Dermot as a witness, the authorities might be satisfied so far as to take him for what he was, instead of for what he had never been. But the perception of the storm of opposition which speaking at present would provoke, made me allow that he was as wise as generous in sparing Viola till his return, since I knew her too well to fear that her heart would be given away in the meantime. Still I did hint, "Might not

she feel your going away without saying anything?"

"Not at all likely," said Harold. "Besides, she would probably be a happier woman if she forgot all about me."

In which, of course, there was no agreeing; but he had made up his mind, and it was plain it was the nobler part—nay, the only honest part, since it was plainly of no use to speak openly. I wondered a little that his love was so self-restrained. It was an intense glow, but not an outbreak; but I think that having gone through all the whirlwind of tempestuous passion for a mere animal like poor Meg made him the more delicately reverent and considerate for the real love of the higher nature which had now developed in him. He said himself that the allowing himself to hope, and ceasing to crush his feelings, was so great a change as to be happiness enough for him; and I guarded carefully against being forced into any promise of silence, being quite determined that, if I saw Viola unhappy, or fancying herself forgotten,

I would, whether it could be called wise or foolish, give her a hint of the true state of things.

Nothing was to be said to Eustace. He would have the field to himself, and it was better that he should convince himself and Lady Diana that there was no hope for him. Harold thought he could safely be commended to George Yolland and me for his affairs and his home life ; and, to our surprise, he did not seem half so reluctant to part with his cousin as we had expected. He had gone his own way a good deal more this winter and spring, as Harold seldom had time to hunt, and did not often drive out, and he had grown much more independent. His share of Boola Boola was likewise to be sold, for neither cousin felt any desire to keep up the connection with the country where they had never had a happy home ; and he gave Harold full authority to transact the sale.

Perhaps we all had shared more or less in Dora's expectation that Harold would come home from London with Prometesky's pardon in

his pocket ; though I laughed at her, and Eustace was furious when we found she thought he was to kneel before the Queen, present his petition, and not only receive the pardon, but rise up Sir Harold Alison ! It did fall flat when he came back, having had very satisfactory interviews, but only with the Secretaries of State, and having been assured that Prometesky would be certainly pardoned, but that, as a matter of form, some certificates of conduct and recommendations must be obtained from New South Wales before the pardon could be issued.

This precipitated Harold's departure. Dermot was just well enough to be likely to be the better for a voyage, and the first week in May was fixed for their setting forth. A great box appeared in my sitting-room, where Harold began to stow all manner of presents of various descriptions for friends and their children, but chiefly for the shepherds' families at Boola Boola ; and in the midst, Mrs. Alison, poor thing, brought a whole box of beautifully-knitted worsted stockings, which she implored Harold to carry to her dear Henry ;

and he actually let her pack them up, and promised that, if he ever found Henry, they should be given. "And this little Bible," said the good old lady; "maybe he has lost his own. Tell him it is his poor papa's, and I know he will bring it back to me."

"He shall if I can make him," said Harold.

"And Harold, my dear," said Mrs. Alison, with her hand on his shoulder, as he knelt by his box, "you'll go to see your own poor mamma?"

Harold started and winced. "My mother is in New Zealand," he said.

"Yes, my dear," said the old lady triumphantly; "but that's only the other side of the way, for I looked in Lucy's map."

"And she has a husband," added Harold between his teeth, ignoring what the other side of the way might mean.

"Yes, my dear, I know he is not a nice man, but you are her only one, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"And I know what that is—not that I ever

married anyone but your poor uncle, nor ever would, not if the new rector had asked me, which many expected and even paid their compliments to me on, but I always said 'No, no.' But you'll go and see her, my dear, and comfort her poor heart, which, you may depend, is longing and craving after you, my dear; and all the more if her new gentleman isn't quite as he should be."

Harold could not persuade himself to bring out any answer but "I'll see about it;" and when we were alone, he said with a sigh, "If I should be any comfort to her poor heart."

"I should think there was no doubt of that."

"I am afraid of committing murder," answered Harold, almost under his breath, over the trunk.

"Oh, Harold! Not now."

"I don't know," he said.

"You have not seen him for ten years. He may be altered as much as you."

"And for the worse. I could almost say I dare not."

"There's nothing you don't dare, God helping you," I said.

"I shall think. If it is my duty, I suppose God will help me. Hitherto, I have thought my rage against the brutes made it worse for her, and that I do best for her by keeping out of the way."

"I think they would respect you now too much to do anything very bad before you."

"She would fare the worse for it afterwards."

"I am of Mrs. Alison's opinion, that she would be willing for the sake of seeing her son, and such a son."

Harold sighed.

"But it could not have been so dreadful when Eustace lived with them, and was so fond of the man."

"He flattered Eustace to curry favour with him and his father. He has sunk much lower. Then he lived like a decent clergyman. He has thrown all that off in New Zealand, and fallen entirely under the dominion of that son. I could

wish I had quite throttled that Dick when I so nearly did so at school."

"If you say such things, I shall think you ought not to trust yourself there."

"That is it—I am afraid. I have crimes enough already."

It was too great a responsibility to persuade him to put himself into temptation, even now that he knew what prayer was. I longed to have seen him come yet nearer, and taken the means of strengthening and refreshing. But he said, "I cannot; I have not time to make fit preparation." And when I pleaded that I could not bear to think of his encountering danger without fulfilling that to which the promise of Everlasting Life is attached, I struck the wrong key. What he was not ready to do for love, he would not do for fear, or hurry preparation beyond what his conscience approved, that he might have what I was representing as the passport of salvation. Whether he were right or wrong I know not even now, but it was probably through the error of the very insufficient adviser the poor fellow had chosen in

me. It may seem strange, but I had never thought of his irreligion as an obstacle with Viola, for, first, I knew him to be a sincere learner, as far as he went ; and next, her sister's husband had none of the goodness that Lady Diana's professions would have led one to expect in her chosen son-in-law.

We all met and parted at the railway-station, whither Viola came with her brother. Dora had been only allowed to come upon solemn promises of quietness, and at the last our attention was more taken up with her than anyone else, for she was very white, and shook from head to foot with the effort at self-restraint, not speaking a word, but clinging to Harold with a tight grip of his hand, and, when that was not attainable, of his coat. Fortunately the train was punctual, and the ordeal did not last long. Harold put in all his goods and Dermot's, and finally he lifted the poor child up in his arms, held her close, and then, as her hands locked convulsively round his neck, Eustace unclasped them, and Harold put her down on my lap as I sat down on the bench, left a kiss on my brow, wrung Eustace's hand, pressed Viola's,

saying, "I'll take care of your brother," and then, with one final impulse, carried the hand to his lips and kissed it, before springing into the carriage, which was already in motion. Poor Dora was actually faint, and never having experienced the feeling before, was frightened, and gasped out, "Hasn't it killed me, Lucy?"

The laugh that was unavoidable did us all good, and I sent Eustace for some restorative from the refreshment-room. The child had to be carried to the carriage, and was thoroughly out of order for several days. Poor little girl, we neither of us knew that it was the beginning of her darker days!

Of Harold's doings in Australia I can tell less than of those at home. He kept his promise, dear fellow, and wrote regularly. But, alas! his letters are all gone, and I can only speak from memory of them, and from what Dermot told me.

Making no stay in Sydney, they pushed on to Boola Boola, avoiding a halt at Cree's Station, but making at once for Prometesky's cottage, a wonderful hermitage, as Dermot described it,

almost entirely the work of the old man's ingenious hands. There he lived, like a philosopher of old, with the most sternly plain and scanty materials for comfort—a mat, a table, and a chair ; but surrounded by beautiful artistic figures and intricate mathematical diagrams traced on his floor and wall, reams of essays and poems where he had tried to work out his thought ; fragments of machines, the toys of his constructive brain, among which the travellers found him sitting like a masculine version of Albert Dürer's *Melancholia*, his laughing jackass adding tones of mockery to the scene, perched on the bough, looking down, as his master below took to pieces some squatter's crazy clock.

When Harold's greeting had aroused him, Dermot said, nothing could be more touching than the meeting with Prometesky, who looked at him as a father might look at a newly-recovered son, and seemed to lose the joy of the prospect of his own freedom in the pride and exultation of his own boy, his Ambrose's son, having achieved it. The beauty of the place enchanted Dermot, and his first ride round the property made him marvel

how man could find it in his heart to give up this free open life of enterprise for the tameness of an old civilised country. But Harold smiled, and said he had found better things in England.

Harold found that there were serious losses in the numbers of the sheep of the common stock, and that all the neighbouring settlers were making the like complaint. Bushranging, properly so called, had been extinguished by the goldfind in Victoria, but as my brothers had located themselves as far as possible from inhabited districts, Boola Boola was still on the extreme border of civilisation, and there was a long, wide mountain valley, called the Red Valley, beyond it, with long gulleys and ravines branching up in endless ramifications, where a gang of runaway shepherds and unsuccessful gold diggers were known to haunt, and were almost certainly the robbers. The settlers and mounted police had made some attempts at tracking them out, but had always become bewildered in the intricacies of the ravines, and the losing one's way in those eucalyptus forests was too awful a danger to be encountered.

A fresh raid had taken place the very night before Harold arrived at Boola Boola, upon a flock pasturing some way off. The shepherds were badly beaten, and then baled up, and a couple of hundred sheep were driven off.

Now Harold had, as a lad, explored all the recesses of these ravines, and was determined to put an end to the gang; and when it became known that Harold Alison was at home, and would act as guide, a fully sufficient party of squatters, shepherds, and police rallied for the attack, and Dermot, in great delight, found himself about to see a fight in good earnest.

A very sufficient guide Harold proved himself, and they came, not to any poetical robber's cavern, but within sight of a set of shanties, looking like any ordinary station of a low character. There a sudden volley of shot from an ambush poured upon them, happily without any serious wounds, and a hand-to-hand battle began, for the robbers having thus taken the initiative, it was hardly needful to display the search warrant with which the party had come armed. And to

the amazement of all, the gang was headed by a man who seemed the very counterpart of Harold, not, perhaps, quite so tall, but with much the same complexion and outline, though he was somewhat older, and had the wild, fierce, ruffianly aspect of a bushranger. This man was taking deliberate aim at the magistrate who acted as head of the party, when Harold flung down his own loaded rifle, sprang upon him, and there was the most tremendous wrestling match that Dermot said he could have imagined. Three times Harold's antagonist touched the earth, three times he sprang from it again with redoubled vigour, until, at last, Harold clasped his arms round him, lifted him in the air, and dashed him to the ground, where he lay senseless. And then, to the general amusement, Harold seemed astonished at his state as he lay prone, observing, "I did not want to hurt him ;" and presently told Dermot, "I believe he is old Mrs. Sam Alison's son."

And so it proved. He was the Henry or Harry Alison of whose deeds the Stymptons had heard. The gang was, after all, not very exten-

sive ; two had been shot in the fray, one was wounded, and one surrendered. Alison, though not dead, was perfectly helpless, and was carried down the rocky valley on an extemporary litter, Harold taking his usual share of the labour. The sheep and cattle on whom were recognised the marks of the Alisons of Boola Boola, and of sundry of their neighbours, were collected, to be driven down and reclaimed by their owners, and the victory was complete.

CHAPTER V.

THE GOLDEN FRUIT.

WHILE all this was passing on the other side the world, Eustace fulfilled his wish for a season in London, was presented by Lord Erymanth, went to a court ball, showed his horses in the Park, lived at a club, and went to Ascot and Epsom. He fulfilled Harold's boast that he might be trusted not to get into mischief, for he really had no taste for vice, and when left to himself had the suspicious dislike to spending money which is so often found where the intellect is below the average. Vanity and self-consequence were the poor fellow's leading foibles, and he did not find that they were gratified when among his equals and superiors in station. Sensible men could not make him a

companion, and the more dangerous stamp of men, when they could not fleece him, turned him into ridicule, so that he came home discontented.

It was not for my sympathy or company that he came home. He should have had it, for I had grown really fond of him, and was he not a charge left me by Harold? But he did not want me more than as lady of the house when he gave a dinner-party; and after his experiences of club dinners his requirements had become so distracting as to drive our old servants away and me nearly crazy. Also he was constantly in a state of discontent with Mr. Yolland about the management of the estate, always grumbling about expenses and expecting unreasonable returns, and interfering with the improvements Harold had set in hand, till Mr. Yolland used to come and seek private interviews with me, to try to get me to instil the explanations in which he had failed. Once or twice I made peace, but things grew worse and worse. I heard nothing but petulant abuse of George Yolland on one side, and on the

other I knew he would have thrown up the agency except for Harold.

When at Michaelmas Eustace informed him that the estate should no longer go on without a regular responsible agent, and that one was engaged who had been recommended by Mr. Horsman, I do not know whether he was most hurt or relieved, though I could hardly forgive the slight to his cousin, far less the reply, when I urged the impropriety. "Harold can't expect to domineer over everything. He has put me to expense enough already with his fancies."

In truth Eustace had been resorting all this time to the companionship of the Horsmans. Hunting, during the previous winter, had thrown him with them more than we knew, and when he found me far more of a champion for Harold's rights than he wished, and, I fear too, much less tolerant of his folly and petulance than when his cousin was present to make the best of them by his loyal love, he deserted home more and more for Therford Hall. Dora and I were hardly sorry, for he was very cross to her, and had almost forgotten his

deference to me ; but I certainly was not prepared for the announcement of his engagement to Hippolyta Horsman.

From sheepishness and want of *savoir faire*, he had not even properly withdrawn his suit from Viola Tracy, thus making Lady Diana and Lord Erymanth very angry, though the damsel herself was delighted. I had ventured to give one little hint of how the land lay with Harold, and she had glowed with a look of intense gladness as of being confirmed in a happy belief. I don't even now think it was wrong. It might have been imprudent, but it made that year of her life full of a calm bright hope and joy that neither she nor I can ever regret.

As far as could be guessed, Hippolyta's first and strongest attraction had been towards Harold ; but when it had been met by distaste and disregard, she had turned her attention to the squire, who could be easily gained by judicious flattery. In those days, I could see no excuse for Hippolyta, and ascribed no motives to her but fortune-hunting and despair at being a spinster so long ; but I

have since learnt to think that she had a genuine wish to be in a position of usefulness rather than to continue her aimless life of rattle and excitement, and that she had that impulse to take care of Eustace and protect him which strong-minded women sometimes seem to feel for weak men.

The courtship was conducted at archery meetings, and afterwards at shooting parties, out of my sight and suspicion, though the whole neighbourhood was talking of it, and Miss Avice Stympson had come to Arghouse to inquire about it, and impart her great disapproval of Hippo, long before it was officially announced to me, and Eustace at the same time kindly invited Mrs. Alison and me to remain where I was till after the wedding. I understood that this had been dictated to him, and was an intimation which I scarcely needed, that Arghouse would be our home no longer.

Just as I was thinking what proposal to make to Mrs. Alison came Harold's letters about his unfortunate Australian double. His first letter to the poor old lady merely told her that he

had found her son, and that he was at Sydney, laid up by a bad accident received in a fray with the police. His back was hurt, but there was no cause to fear danger. He sent his love, and Harold would write again. Viola sent me Dermot's letter with full particulars, but I kept silence through all the mother's agitations of joy and grief.

The next mail brought me full details of the skirmish, and of what Harold had learnt of Henry Alison's course. It had been a succession of falls lower and lower, as with each failure habits of drunkenness and dissipation fastened on him, and peculation and dishonesty on that congenial soil grew into ruffianism. Expelled from the gold diggings for some act too mean even for that atmosphere, he had become the leader of a gang of runaway shepherds in the recesses of the Red Valley, and spread increasing terror there until the attack on him in his stronghold, when Harold's cousinly embrace (really intended to spare his life, as well as that of the magistrate) had absolutely injured his spine, probably for life.

He had with great difficulty been carried to Sydney, and there placed in the hospital instead of the jail; since, disabled as he was, no one wished to prosecute the poor wretch, and identification was always a difficulty. Harold had been taking daily care of him, and had found him in his weak and broken state ready to soften, nay, to shed tears, at the thought of his mother; evincing feelings that might be of little service if he had recovered, but if he were crippled for life might be the beginning of better things. Harold had given him the Bible, and the stockings, and had left him alone with them. The Bible was as yet left untouched, as if he were afraid of it, but he had ever since been turning over and fondling the stockings, as though all the love that the poor mother had been knitting into them for years and years, apparently in vain, were exhaling like the heat and colours stored by the sun in ages past in our coals.

Harold was wondering over the question whether a man in his state could or ought to be brought to England, or whether it could be

possible to send his mother out to him, when the problem was solved by his falling in with a gentleman whose wife was a confirmed invalid, and who was ready to give almost any salary to a motherly, ladylike woman, beyond danger of marrying, who would take care of her and attend to the household. He would even endure the son, and lodge him in one of the dependencies of his house, which had large grounds looking into beautiful Sydney Bay, provided he could secure such a person.

Even an escort had been arranged, as a brother of the gentleman was in England, and about to return with his wife to Australia; so that I was at once to communicate with them, pack her up, and consign her to them. To Mrs. Alison herself Harold wrote with the offer of the situation, and a representation of her son's need and longing for her, telling her the poor fellow's affectionate messages, and promising himself to meet her at Sydney on her arrival.

He must needs await the arrival of Prometheus's pardon, in answer to the recommendations

that had gone by this very mail, and which he had had no difficulty in obtaining. The squatters round Boola Boola would have done anything for the man who had delivered them from the Red Valley gang; and, besides, there was no one who had been long enough in the country to remember anything adverse to the old hermit mechanist, and most of them could hardly believe that he "had not come out at his own expense." And at Sydney, as a visitor, highly spoken of by letters from the Colonial Secretary, and in company with an English gentleman connected as was Mr. Tracy, Harold found himself in a very different sphere from that of the wild young sheep-farmer, coming down half for business, half for roistering diversion. He emulated Eustace's grandeur by appearances at Government House, and might have made friends with many of the superior families, if, after putting things in train for the sale of Boola Boola, he had not resolved on spending his waiting time on a journey to New Zealand to see his mother.

He trusted himself the more from having

visited the Crees, and having found he could keep his temper when they sneered at him as a swell and a teetotaller—nay, even wounded him more deeply by the old man's rejection of his offers of assistance, as if he had wanted to buy the family off from denouncing him as having been the death of their daughter. Often Harold must have felt it well for him that Dermot Tracy knew the worst beforehand—nay, that what he learnt in New South Wales was mild compared with the Stympson version. Dermot himself wrote to his uncle the full account of what he had learnt from Cree and from Prometesky of Harold's real errors, and what Henry Alison had confessed of those attributed to him, feeling that this was the best mode of clearing the way for those hopes which Harold had not concealed from him. Dermot was thoroughly happy, enchanted with the new world, more enthusiastic about his hero than ever, and eager to see as much as possible; but they renewed their promise to be in Sydney in time to greet poor old Mrs. Alison.

Dear old body, what a state she was in,

between joy and grief, love and terror, heart and brain. She never wavered in her maternal eagerness to go to "poor little Henry," but what did she not imagine as to Botany Bay? She began sewing up sovereigns in chamois-leather bags to be dispersed all over her person against the time when she should have to live among the burglars; and Dora, who was desperately offended, failed to convince her that she might as well expect robbers at home. However, the preparations were complete at last, and I took her myself to the good people who were to have the charge of her. I had no fears in sending her off, since Harold was sure to arrange for her maintenance and comfort, in case of her situation not being a success; and though I had learnt to love her, and lost in her my chaperon. I was glad to be so far unencumbered; and to be freed from the fear that Eustace and Hippolyta might do something harshly inconsiderate by her, in their selfish blindness to all save themselves.

Hippolyta's fortune was in a complicated state,

which made her settlements long in being made out; and as Eustace did not wish to turn me out till the wedding, I had time to wait to ascertain what Harold would like me to do. I hoped that Dora was so inconvenient an appendage that I should be allowed to keep her, but I found that Hippolyta had designs on her—saying, truly enough, that she could neither write nor spell, and knew not a word of any language. “Poor Lucy Alison, what could be expected of her!” So Dora was to go to the married cousins in London, who, by thus taking her in, would be enabled to have a superior governess for their own tribe. Poor Dora! how fiercely she showed her love for me all those weeks of reprieve, and how hard I laboured to impress upon her that her intended system of defiance to the whole Horsman family was not, by any means, such a proof of affection as either Harry or I should relish.

More letters from our travellers from New Zealand turned our attention from our own troubles. They had reached Dunedin, and there found Harold’s letter, to announce his coming,

waiting at the post-office. The Smith family had left the place, and Mr. Smith only came or sent from time to time when Harold's regular letters, containing remittances, were due. By inquiry, they were traced to the goldfields; and thither Harold and Dermot repaired, through curious experiences and recognitions of old army and London friends of Dermot's, now diggers or mounted police. Save for one of these gentlemen, much better educated than Harold, but now far rougher looking, they would never have found the house where "Parson Smith" (a title that most supposed to be entirely unfounded) made a greater profit by selling the necessities of life to the diggers, than did his son by gold-digging and washing.

Poor Alice, the stately farmhouse beauty of thirty years ago, was a stooping, haggard, broken-down wreck—not a slattern, but an overworked drudge, with a face fitter for seventy than for fifty years old, and a ghastly look of long-continued sickness.

Her husband was out, and she sat, propped

up in a chair behind the board that served for a counter, still attending to the shop; and thus it was that her son beheld her when he stooped under the low doorway, with the one word, "Mother."

Dermot had waited outside, but Harold called him in the next moment. "He will mind the shop, mother. I'll carry you to your bed. You are not fit to be here a moment."

And Dermot found himself selling tobacco, tin cups, and knives to very rough-looking customers, some of whom spoke in as refined a voice as he could do, and only asked what green chum the parson could have picked up instead of the sickly missus.

Alice Smith was indeed far gone in illness, the effect of exposure, drudgery, and hard usage. Perhaps her husband might have had mercy on her, but they were both cowed by the pitiless brute of a step-son, whose only view was to goad her into driving their profitable traffic to her last gasp. But there was no outbreak between them and Harold. The father's nature was to cringe

and fawn, and the son estimated those thews and muscles too well to gratify his hatred by open provocation, and was only surly and dogged, keeping himself almost entirely out of the way. Alice wanted nothing but to look at her son—"her beautiful boy," "her Harry come back to her at last;" and kind and tender to her and loving, as he had never been since his baby days; but he would have moved heaven and earth to obtain comforts and attendance for her. Dermot rode a fabulous distance, and brought back a doctor for a fabulous fee, and loaded his horse with pillows and medicaments; but the doctor could only declare that she had a fatal disease of long standing and must die, though care and comfort might a little while prolong her life. It was welcome news to poor Alice, provided she might only die while her boy was still with her, shutting out all that had so long made her life one ground-down course of hopeless wretchedness.

Smith's most profitable form of employment was carrying dinners out to the men at work; and for an hour or two at noon the little store

was entirely free from customers. The day after the doctor's visit, Dermot came in at this time to speak to Harold, and as soon as Alice knew of his presence (there was a mere partition of slab between her bed and the shop), she eagerly and nervously bade him stay and keep watch that no one should come near to see or hear. Then, when certain that she was alone with her son, she produced from hiding-places about her person what appeared to be three balls of worsted—her eyes gleaming, and her whole person starting at every sound. She laid her skeleton fingers over them with a start of terror, as Harold, puzzled at first, would have unwound one; but made him weigh them, parted the covering with her nail, and showed for one instant a yellow gleam. Each held a nugget of unusual size! Her urgency and her terror were excessive till they were out of sight in his pockets, though he protested that this was but to satisfy her for the moment; he could not keep them. She laid her head so close to his that she could whisper, and told him they were not meant for him. They

were payment for the £200 of which her husband had defrauded the elder Eustace, and which had been a heavy weight ever since on her high-spirited pride. By one of the strange chances that often befell in the early days of the gold-fields, she, going to draw water at a little stream soon after her first arrival, had seen these lying close together in the bed of the shallow rivulet—three lumps of gold formed by a freak of nature into the likeness of the golden pippins her father used to be so proud of, and the gathering of which had been the crisis of the courtship of the two handsome lads from Arghouse.

With the secretiveness that tyranny had taught her, Alice hid her treasure ; and with the inborn honest pride which had, under Smith's dominion, cost her so much suffering, she swore to herself that they should go to Eustace to wipe out the fraud against his father. She had sought opportunities ever since, and believed that she should have to send for some man in authority when she was dying, and no one could gainsay her, and commit them to him, little guessing that it

was in her own son's hands that she should place them.

As little did she reckon on what Harold chose to do. He said that for him to conceal them, and take them away without her husband's knowledge, would be mere robbery; but that he would show them to Smith, and sign a receipt for them, "for Eustace Alison," in payment of the sum of £200 due from James Smith to his father. Mr. Tracy and his friend, the policeman, should be witnesses, and the nuggets themselves should be placed in charge of the police, when their weight and value would be ascertained, and any overplus returned to Smith. The poor woman trembled exceedingly—Dermot heard the rustling as he stood outside; and he also heard Harold's voice soothing her, and assuring her that she should not be left to the revenge of young Dick Smith. No, she feared not that; she was past the dread of Dick for herself, but not for Harold. He laughed, and said that they durst not touch him.

For his mother's relief, and for Dermot's safety, he, however, waited to say anything till

the assistance of the gentleman of the police force had been secured, so that there might be no delay to allow Dick Smith to gather his fellows for revenge or recovery of the gold.

And with these precautions all went well. Harold, in the grave, authoritative way that had grown on him, reminded Mr. Smith of a heavy debt due to his uncle ; and when the wretched man began half to deny and half to entreat in the same breath, Harold said that he had received from his mother a deposit in payment thereof, and that he had prepared a receipt, which he requested Mr. Smith to see him sign in presence of the two witnesses now waiting.

Smith's resentment and disappointment at the sight of the treasure his wife had hidden from him were unspeakable. He was not an outwardly passionate man, and he was in mortal fear, not only of the giant who seemed to fill up all his little room, but also of anything that could compromise him with the police. So he suppressed his passion, aware that resistance would bring out stories that could not bear the light.

Harold signed, and the golden apples were carried away to the office, where Mr. Smith was invited to come the next day and see them weighed.

That night Harold kept watch over his mother ; and Dermot, who was thought to be at his friend's shanty, kept watch near the door : but Dick Smith, hating Harold's presence, had gone on an excursion lasting some days, and before his father went in quest of him in the morning, Harold had a proposal ready—namely, to continue to pay Smith what he already allowed his mother, with an addition, provided he were allowed to take her with him to Dunedin, and, if possible, home.

Smith haggled, lamented, and pretended to hesitate, but accepted the terms at last, and then showed considerable haste in setting the party off on their journey before his son should come home, fearing, perhaps, some deadly deed if Dick should discover what a prey the poor woman had concealed from him, while she was within his reach ; and as the worth of the apples was

estimated at about twenty pounds beyond the debt, Harold paid this to him at once, and they left him in the meek, plausible, tearful stage of intoxication, piteously taking leave of his wife as if she were the very darling of his heart, and making fine speeches about his resolution to consign her to her son for the sake of her health. So contemptible had the poor creature become, that Harold found it easier to pity than to hate him.

Besides, Harold had little thought then to spare from the eager filial and maternal affection that had been in abeyance all the years since poor Alice's unhappy marriage. For a little while the mother and son were all in all to each other. The much-enduring woman, used to neglected physical suffering, bore the journey apparently well, when watched over and guarded with a tender kindness recalling that of the husband of her youth; and Harold wrote to me from Dunedin full of hope and gladness, aware that his mother could never be well again, but trusting that we might yet give her such peace and rest as she had never yet tasted.

Again came bitter vexation in Eustace's way of receiving the intelligence. "I hope he does not mean to bring her here. It would be so extremely inconvenient—not a widow even! It would just confirm all the scandals *I* have surmounted."

"I thought she had been almost as much a mother to you as your own?"

"Oh, that was when I was at school, and they were paid for it. Besides, what a deceitful fellow Smith was, and how he defrauded me."

"And how she has restored it!"

"I hope Harold will not go and get those nuggets changed into specie. They would make splendid ornaments—so *distingué* with such a story attached to them."

I could only again tell myself that my first impression had been right, and that he must be underwitted to be so absolutely impervious to gratitude. How Harold must have bolstered him up to make him so tolerable as he had been.

He need not have feared. Alice's improve-

ment was but a last flash of the expiring flame. She grew worse the very day after Harold wrote to me, and did not live three weeks after he brought her into the town, though surrounded by such cares as she had never known before. She died, they said, more from being worn out than from the disease. She had done nothing her whole lifetime but toil for others ; and if unselfishness and silent slavery can be religion in a woman, poor Alice had it. But !

Harold once asked her the saddest question that perhaps a son could ask : "Mother, why did you never teach me to say my prayers?"

She stared at him with her great, sunken, uncomplaining eyes, and said, "I hadn't time ;" and as he gave some involuntary groan, she said, "You see we never got religion, not Dorothy and me, while we were girls ; and when our troubles came, I'm sure we'd no time for such things as that. When your father lay a-dying, he did say, 'Alice, take care the boy gets to know his God better than we have done ;' but you were a great big boy by that time, and I thought I

would take care you was taught by marrying a parson and a schoolmaster ; but there, I ought to have remembered there was none so hard on us as the parsons !”

Nor would she see a clergyman. She had had enough of that sort, she said, with the only petulance she ever showed to Harold when he pressed it. She did not object to his reading to her some of those passages in the Bible and Prayer-Book which had become most dear to him, but she seemed rather to view it as one of the wonderful performances of her boy—a part of his having become “as good an English gentleman as ever his poor father was, and able to hold up his head with any of them.” She was too ill to be argued with ; she said “she trusted in God,” whatever she meant by that ; and so she died, holding Harold’s hand as long as her fingers could clasp, and gazing at him as long as her eyes could see.

He wrote to me all out of his overflowing heart, as he could never have spoken by word of mouth, on his voyage between New Zealand

and Australia ; and on his arrival there, finding our letters just before the mail went out, he added the characteristic line to the one he had written to Eustace, "All right, old chap, I wish you joy ;" and to me he wrote, that since I asked what he wished, he thought I had better take a house by the year in, or near, Mycening, and see how things would turn out. He hoped I should keep Dora. We need not write again, for he should leave Sydney before our letters could arrive.

I found a little house called Mount Eaton, on the Neme Heath side of Mycening, with a green field between it and the town, and the heath stretching out beyond, where Harold might rush out and shake his mane instead of feeling cribbed and confined. It wanted a great deal of painting and papering, which I set in hand at once, but of course it was a more lingering business than I expected. All the furniture and books that had belonged to my own mother had been left to me, and it had been settled by the valuation, when I knew little about it, what these were ; and all that re-

mained was to face Eustace's disgust at finding how many of "the best things" it comprised. Hippolyta showed to advantage there. I believe she was rather glad to get rid of them, and to have the opportunity of getting newer and more fashionable ones; but, at any rate, she did it with a good grace, and made me welcome not only to my own property, but to remain at Arghouse till my new abode should be habitable, which I hoped would be a day or two after the wedding.

The great grievance was, however, that I had put myself and Dora into mourning, feeling it very sad that this last of the four exiles should be the only one of whose death I even knew. Eustace thought the whole connection ought to be forgotten, and that, whatever I might choose to do, it was intolerable that *his* sister, the present Miss Alison of Arghouse, should put on mourning for the wife of a disgraced fellow, a runaway parson turned sharper!

I am afraid I was not as patient or tolerant as I ought to have been, and it ended in the

time of reprieve being put an end to, and Dora being carried off by the Horsmans to her new schoolroom in London, her resistance, and the home-truths she told her brother, only making him the more inexorable. Poor little girl! I do not like to think of the day I put her into Hippolyta's hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLOODHOUND.

IT was a broiling evening in early June, very beautiful, but so hot that I dreaded the fatigue and all the adjuncts of the morrow's wedding, when I was to be a bridesmaid, and should see my poor little Dora again. I was alone, for Eustace was sleeping at Therford Vicarage, but I had not time for sentiment over the old home and old gardens. I was turning out the old Indian cabinets, which were none of mine, though they had always been called so, and putting into cotton wool and paper all my treasures there, ready for transport, when a shadow fell on me from the open window. I looked up, and there stood Harold!

Oh, how unlike it was from the way in which we had met three years before as bewildered strangers! I do not think that sister could ever have met brother with more entire feeling that home, and trust, and staff, and stay were come back to her, than when I found Harold's arm round me, his head bending down to me. I was off my own mind!

When our greeting was over, Harold turned and said, "Here he is."

I saw a fine-looking old man, with a certain majesty of air that one could not define. He was pale, wrinkled, and had deep furrows of suffering on cheek and brow, but his dark eyes, under a shaggy white penthouse, were full of keen fire and even ardour. His bald forehead was very fine, and his mouth—fully visible, for he was closely shaven—had an ineffable, melancholy sweetness about it, so that the wonderful power of leading all with whom he came in contact was no longer a mystery to me; for, fierce patriot and desperate republican as he might have been, nothing could destroy the

inborn noble, and instinctively I bent to him with respect as I took his hand in welcome.

After the hasty inquiries, "Where's Dora?" "Where's Eustace?" "Where's Dermot Tracy?" had been answered, and I had learnt that this last had gone on to London, where his family were, Harold hurried out to see about sending for the luggage, and Prometesky, turning to me, almost took my breath away by saying, "Madam, I revere you. You have done for the youth so dear to me what I could never have done, and have transformed him from a noble savage to that far higher being—the Christian hero."

I did not take this magnificent compliment as if I had been of the courtly continental blood of him who made it: it made me hot and sheepish, yet even now I still feel warm at the heart when I remember it; for I know he really meant it, little as I deserved it, for the truth was what I faltered out: "It was all in him."

"It was all in him. That is true; but it needed to be evoked, so as not to be any longer

stified and perverted by the vehemence of his physical nature. When he left me, after the great catastrophe which changed him from the mere exaggerated child, gratifying every passion with violence, I knew it depended on what hands he would fall into, whether the spiritual or the animal would have the mastery. Madam, it was into your hands that he fell, and I thank God for it, even more than for the deliverance that my dear pupil has gained for me."

He had tears in his eyes as he took my hand and kissed it, and very much overpowered I was. I had somewhat dreaded finding him a free-thinker, but there was something in both speeches that consoled me, and he afterwards said to me: "Madam, in our youth intellectual Catholics are apt to reject what our reason will not accept. We love not authority. In age we gain sympathy with authority, and experience has taught us that there can be a Wisdom surpassing our own. We have proved for ourselves that love cannot live without faith."

And Harold told me on the evening of their

return, with much concern, that the old man had made up his mind that, so soon as his health should be sufficiently restored, he would make a retreat among the monks of La Trappe experimentally, and should probably take the vows. "I don't see that his pardon has done much good," he said, and did not greatly accept my representation of the marvellous difference it must make to a Roman Catholic to be no longer isolated from the offices of religion. He had made up his mind to come into Sydney to die, but he was too poor to have lived anywhere but under the Boola Boola rock.

It was a very quietly glad evening, as we three sat round the open window, and asked and answered questions. Harold said he would come to the wedding with me the next day ; he must see old Eu married ; and, besides, he wanted to give up to him the three nuggets, which had been rather a serious charge. Harold, Prometesky, and Dermot had each carried one, in case of any disaster, that there might be three chances ; but now they were all three laid in my lap—wonderful

things, one a little larger than the others, but all curiously apple-like in form, such gifts as a bride has seldom had.

There was the account of the sale of Boola Boola to be rendered up too ; and the place had risen so much in value that it had brought in far more than Harold had expected when leaving England, so that he and Eustace were much richer men than he had reckoned on being.

Mrs. Sam Alison had arrived safely, but rather surprised not to find people walking on their heads, as she had been told everything was upside down. Her son had so far recovered that he could undertake such employment in writing as it was possible to procure. The mother and son were very happy together, but Harold winced as if a sore were touched when he spoke of their meeting.

I was anxious that he should hear of nothing to vex him that night, for there was more than enough to annoy him another day, and I talked on eagerly about the arrangements for the wed-

ding. Hippolyta had insisted on making it a mingled archery and hunt-wedding. She was to wear the famous belt. The bridegroom, her brothers, and most of the gentlemen were to be in their pink; we bridesmaids had scarlet ribbons, and the favours had miniature fox brushes fastened with arrows in the centre; even our locketts, with their elaborate cypher of E's, A's, and H's, depended from the head of a fox.

Prometesky looked amazed, as well he might. "Your ladies are changed," he said. "It would formerly scarcely have been thought feminine to show such ardour for the chase."

"Perhaps it is not now," I said.

"Or is it in honour of the lady's name? Hippolyta should have a Midsummer wedding, and 'love the musick of her hounds,'" continued the old gentleman, whom I found to have Shakespeare almost by heart, as one of the chief companions of his solitude.

As soon as Harold heard his boxes arriving, he went to work to disinter the wedding present he had provided — a pretty bracelet of New

Zealand green jade set in gold. There was a little parcel for me, too, which he gave me, leading me aside. It was also a locket, and bore a cypher, but how unlike the other! It was a simple A; and within was a lock of silver hair. There was no need to tell me whose it was. "She said she wished she had anything to send you," were Harold's words, "and I cut off this bit of her hair;" and when I wondered over her having taken thought of me, he said, "She blessed you for your kindness to me. If I could only have brought her to you——"

I secured then, as the completion of his gift, one of his thick curls of yellow-brown hair. He showed me the chain he had brought for Dora, and gave me one glance at a clear, pure, crystal cross, from spar found in New Zealand, near the gold-fields. Would he ever be able to give it? I answered the question in his eyes by telling him a certain Etruscan flower-pot had stood in a certain window at Arked House all the winter, and was gone to London now.

Our home breakfast had to be very early, to give time for the drive to Therford, but Harold had been already into Mycening, had exchanged countless hearty greetings, roused up an unfortunate hair-cutter, to trim his locks, bought a hat, and with considerable difficulty found a pair of gloves that he could put on—not kid, but thick riding-gloves ; white, at least—and so he hoped that they would pass in the crowd, and Eustace would not feel himself disgraced. He had not put on the red coat, but had tried to make himself look as satisfactory to Eustace as possible in black, and (from a rather comical sense of duty) he made me look him over to see if he were worthy of the occasion. He certainly was in splendid looks, his rich, profuse beard and hair were well arranged, and his fine bronzed face had not lost its grave expression when at rest, but had acquired a certain loftiness of countenance, which gave him more than ever the air, I was going to say, of a demigod ; but he had now an expression no heathen Greek could give ; it was more like that of the heads by Michael

Angelo, where Christian yearning is added to classic might and beauty.

Prometesky preferred staying at home. He seemed suffering and weary, and said that perhaps he should wander about and renew his acquaintance with the country; and so Harold and I set off together on the drive, which, as I well knew, would be the most agreeable part of the day.

Very lovely it was as we passed in the morning freshness of the glowing summer day through lanes wreathed with dog-roses and white with May, looking over grass-fields with silvery ripples in the breeze into woods all golden and olive-green above with young foliage, and pink below with campion flowers, while the moorland beyond was in its glory of gorse near at hand, and purple hills closing the distance. I remember the drive especially, because Harold looked at the wealth of gay colouring so lovingly, comparing it with the frequently parched uniformity of the Bush, regretting somewhat the limited range, but owning there were better things than unbounded liberty.

When we reached Therford he would not go to the house with me, nor seek to see Eustace before the wedding, saying he should wait in the churchyard and join us afterwards. So in I went into the scene of waiting, interspersed with bustle, that always precedes a wedding, and was handed into the bed-room where the bridesmaids were secluded till the bride was ready, all save Pippa and the most favoured cousin, who were arraying her. There were a dozen, and all were Horsmans except Dora and me. The child made one great leap at me, and squeezed me, to such detriment of our flimsy draperies that she was instantly called to order. Her lip pouted, and her brow lowered; but I whispered two words in her ear, and with a glance in her eye, and an intent look on her face, she stood, a being strangely changed from the listless, sullen, defiant creature she had been a minute before.

Therford was one of those old places where the church is as near as possible to the manor-house, standing on a little elevation above it, and with a long avenue of Lombardy poplars leading

from the south porch, the family entrance, to the front door of the house, so this was that pretty thing, a walking, instead of a carriage, wedding. As one of the procession, I could not see, but the red and white must have made it very pretty, and the Northchester paper was quite poetical in its raptures.

All this was, however, forgotten in the terrible adventure that immediately followed. The general entrance was by the west door, and close to this I perceived Harold following his usual practice of getting into the rear and looking over people's heads. When the service was over, and we waited for the signing of the registers, most of the spectators, and he among them, went out by this western door, and waited in the churchyard to see the procession come out.

Forth it came, headed by the bride and bridegroom, both looking their very handsomest, and we bridesmaids in six couples behind, when, just as we were clear of the porch, and school-children were strewing flowers before the pair, there was a strange shuddering cry, and the great blood-

hound, Kirby, with broken chain and foaming jaws—all the dreadful tokens of madness about him—came rushing up the avenue with the speed of the wind, making full for his mistress, the bride. There was not a moment for her to do more than give a sort of shrieking, despairing command, “Down, Kirby!” when, just as the beast was springing on her, his throat was seized by the powerful hands that alone could have grappled with him, and the terrible head, foaming, and making horrid choking growls, was swung round from her, and the dog lifted by the back of the neck in the air, struggling and kicking violently.

Everyone had given back ; Hippolyta had thrown herself on Eustace, who drew her back, crowding on us, into the porch ; Harold, still holding the dog at arm’s length, made his voice heard in steady tones, “Will some one give me my other glove?”

One hand, that which grasped the dog, was gloved, but the free hand was bare, and it was Dora who first understood, saw the glove at his

feet, sprang to his side, and held it up to him. while he worked his hand into it, and she pulled it on for him. Then he transferred his grasp from one hand to the other, and in that moment the powerful bloodhound made a desperate struggle, and managed to get one paw on the ground, and writhe itself round so as to fly at his face and make its teeth actually meet in his beard, a great mouthful of which it tore out, and we saw it champing the hairs, as he again swung it up, so that it could only make frantic contortions with its body and legs, while he held it at arm's length with the iron strength of his wrists.

This had taken hardly three seconds, and in that time Jack Horsman and a keeper or two had been able to come up, but no one unarmed could give efficient aid, and Harold said, "I'll take him to the yard."

Mr. Horsman led the way, and as the keepers followed with several of the gentlemen, I was forced to let Harold vanish, carrying at arm's length that immense dog, still making horrible rabid struggles.

I don't clearly remember how we got back to the house. Somebody had fainted, I believe, and there was much confusion; but I know nothing but that there was the report of a pistol, and, almost immediately after, I saw Harold coming up to the hall door with Dora lying back in his arms. Then my eyes and ears grew clear, and I flew forward to ask the dreadful question. "No," he said, "she is only a little upset." Unperceived, that child had followed him down, holding the broken chain in which he might have tripped, and had stood by even while he set the poor beast on his feet, and held it for the merciful death shot. It seemed that her purpose had been to suck the wound if he had been bitten, and when once she heard Mr. Horsman exclaim, "All safe, thank God!" she clung to Harold with an inarticulate gasp, in one of those hysterical agonies by which her womanhood from time to time asserted itself. She could not breathe or speak, and he only begged for a place to lay her down. Old Marianne Horsman, the quiet one of the family, took us to her own den, and,

with me, insisted on looking well at Harold's hands and face. What might not that horrid leap have done? But we convinced ourselves that those fangs had only caught his beard, where there was a visible gap, but no sign of a wound; and those riding-gloves had entirely guarded his hands. How blessed the Providence, for ordinarily he never touched gloves, and common white kid ones would have availed little. There was scarce time to speak of it, for the child required all our care, and was only just becoming calmer, as Harold held her, when the bride and bridegroom came in, she, red and eager, he, white and shaken, to summon us to the breakfast. "Don't go!" was her moan, half asleep.

Harold bade me go, and as the bride declared they could not sit down without him, he answered, "Not yet, thank you, I couldn't." And I remembered that his prompt deed of daring had been in defiance of a strong nervous antipathy. There was a spasmodic effort in the smile he attempted, a twitching in the muscles of his throat; he was as pale as his browned cheeks

could become, and his hand was still so unsteady that he was forced to resign to me the spoonful of cordial to put into Dora's mouth.

And at that moment Eustace turned and said, "Have you brought the nuggets?"

Without speaking Harold put his hand into his pocket, and laid them in Eustace's hand.

"These? You said they were golden apples; I thought they would be bigger."

"They are wonderful," said Hippolyta; "no one ever had such a wedding-gift."

"Not that—a debt," said Harold, hoarsely; but Pippa Horsman came and summoned them, and I was obliged to follow, answering old Marianne's entreaties to say what would be good for him by begging for strong coffee, which she promised and ordered, but in the skurry of the household, it never came.

The banquet, held in a tent, was meant to be a brilliantly merry one. The cake had a hunt in sugar all round it, and the appropriate motto, "Hip, hip, hurrah!" and people tried to be hilarious; but with that awful shock thrilling on

everybody's nerves we only succeeded in being noisy, though, as we were assured, there was no cause for alarm or grief. The dog had been tied up on suspicion, and had bitten nothing but one cat, which it had killed. Yet surely grave thankfulness would have been better for us all, as well as more comfortable than loud witticisms and excited laughter. I looked at the two or three clerical members of the clan and wondered at them.

When the moment for healths came, the bride called to her brother, the head of the house, by his pleasing name of Baby, and sent him to fetch Harold, whom he brought back with him. Dora was sound asleep, they said, and room was made for Harold in the bridal neighbourhood in time to hear the baronet, who had married a Horsman of the last generation, propose the health of the bride with all the conventional phrases, and of the bridegroom, as a gentleman who, from his first arrival, had made it his study to maintain the old character of the family, and to distinguish himself by intelligent care for the welfare of his tenants, &c. &c.

Hippolyta must have longed to make the speech in return. We could see her prompting her husband, and, by means of imitations of Lord Erymanth, he got through pretty well with his gracious acceptance of all the praises.

Baby Jack proposed the health of the bridesmaids, adding, more especially, that of the absent one, as a little heroine ; and, after the response, came a ponderous speech by another kinsman, full of compliments to Harold's courage in a fulsome style that made me flush with the vexation it must give him, and the annoyance it would be to reply. I had been watching him. As a pile of lumps of ice fortunately stood near him, he had, at every interval, been transferring one to his glass, filling it up with water, guarding it from the circling decanters, and taking such a draught at every toast that I knew his mouth was parched, and I dreaded that sheer worry would make him utter one of his "young barbarian" bluntnesses ; but what he did was to stand up and say simply, "It is very kind of Colonel Horsman to speak in this way of my share in

the great mercy and deliverance we have received to-day. It is a matter of the greatest thankfulness. Let me in return thank the friends here assembled for their welcome, and, above all, for their appreciation of my cousin, whose position now fulfils my great wish. Three years ago we were friendless strangers. Now he has made himself one with you, and I thank you heartily for it."

I felt rather than heard Nussy Horsman muttering, "pretty well for the large young man;" and it seemed to occur to no one that friends, position, and all had been gained for Eustace by Harold himself. He was requesting permission to take Dora back with us, and it was granted with some demur, because she must be with Mrs. Randall Horsman on her return to town on the Monday; a day's lessons could not be sacrificed, for she was very backward, and had no application; but Harold undertook that she should meet the lady at the station, and gained his point.

Clan Horsman knew too well what he had

done to deny him anything he asked. A man who had not only taken a mad dog by the throat, but had brought home two hundred and twenty pounds worth of gold to lay on the table, deserved something at their hands, though ice was all he actually received; but Eustace, when he came to us while the bride was changing her dress, was in a fretful, fault-finding mood, partly it may be from the desire to assert himself, as usual, above his cousin.

He was dissatisfied with the price paid for Boola Boola. Someone had told him it would realise four times as much, and when Harold would have explained that this was unreasonable, he was cut short with the declaration that the offer ought not to have been accepted without reference to the other party concerned.

Next he informed Harold, in an off-hand way, that some of the new improvements at Arghouse would not work, and that he had a new agent—a *responsible* agent—who was not to be interfered with.

There was a certain growl in Harold's "Very

well," but the climax was Eustace's indignation when he heard of Prometesky's arrival. He had worked himself, by way of doing the country squire completely, into a disgust of the old exile, far out-Heroding what he had heard from Lord Erymanth, and that "the old incendiary" should be in his house was a great offence.

"He shall not sleep there another night, neither will I," said Harold, in a calm voice, but with such a gleam in his eyes as I had seen when he fell on Bullock.

It had at least the effect of reducing Eustace to his old habit of subordination, and he fell into an agony of "No, I did not mean that, and——" stammering out something in excuse about not liking the servants and all to think he was harbouring a returned convict.

I had taken care of that. I knew how "that that there Potsky" was the ogre of the riots, and I had guarded against his identification by speaking of our guest as the foreign gentleman who had come home with Mr. Harold, and causing him to be called Count Stanislas; and, on hearing this,

Eustace became so urgent in his entreaties, that Harold, though much hurt, relented so far as to promise at any rate to remain till Monday, so that Dora should not detect the offence.

We saw the happy pair off, among the old shoes, to spend some months abroad, while the old house was revived for them, and then we had our own drive home, which was chiefly occupied with Dora, who, sitting on Harold's knee, seemed to expect her full rescue from all grievances, and was terribly disappointed to find that he had no power to remove her from her durance in the London school-room, where she was plainly the dunce and the black sheep, a misery to herself and all concerned, hating everyone and disliked by all. To the little maiden of the Bush, only half tamed as yet, the London school-room and walks in the park were penance in themselves, and the company of three steady prim girls, in the idealess state produced by confinement to a school-room, and nothing but childish books, was as distasteful to her as she was shocking to them, and her life was

one warfare with them and with their Fraulein. The only person she seemed able to endure was Nussy Horsman, who was allowed to haunt his cousin Randall's house, and who delighted in shocking the decorous monotony of the trio of sisters, finding the vehement little Australian far more entertaining, while, whether he teased or stimulated her, she found him the least uncongenial being she met in Paddington. But what struck me most was the manner in which Harold spoke to her, not merely spoiling her, and giving her her own way, as if he were only a bigger child, but saying "It will all get better, Dora, if you only try to do your best."

"I haven't got any best to do."

"Everybody has."

"But I don't want it to be better. I want to be with you and Lucy."

Then came some reasoning about impossibilities, too low for me to hear in the noise of the wheels, but ending with "It is only another thing to conquer. You can conquer anything if you only try, and pray to God to help you."

"I haven't said my prayers since I went away. They ordered me, and said I was wicked ; but you don't Harold, do you ?" she cried triumphantly, little expecting the groan she met in answer, "Yes, indeed I do, Dora. I only wish I had done so sooner."

"I thought it was no use," she said, crying at his tone. "It was so unkind to take me away from Lucy ;" and whereas she hardly ever shed tears and was now far from restored after the fright, when she once began we could hardly stop her weeping, and were thankful when she was soothed into another sleep, which we durst not peril by a word.

It deepened and lasted so that Harold carried her upstairs still asleep, and laid her on her own little bed. Then he came out with me into my dear old sitting-room, where, without another word, he knelt in the old place and said, "*That* psalm, please Lucy."

"I think we ought to give thanks in church," I said, presently.

"Whatever is right," he said fervently.

"It was the greatest escape you ever had," I said.

"Yes," he said, shuddering; "at least it seemed so. I really thought the dog had bitten me when he flew in my face. It felt just like it, and I was very near giving up. I don't mean letting him go, but not heeding whether he touched me or not. It kept on haunting me till I was alone with Dora, and could examine at the looking-glass."

Of course I was not content till I had likewise again convinced myself by searching into the beard, and then I added, "Ah! this is worse than the lion, though then you were really hurt."

"Yes, but there one knew the worst. Besides," he said, again overcoming a shudder, "I know my feeling about dogs is a weakness owing to my sin. 'Deliver me from the power of the dog,' to me expresses all the power of evil."

Then he sat down and took a pen to write to Mr. Crosse. "Harold Alison wishes to give thanks to Almighty God for a great mercy."

And after that he never alluded to the adven-

ture again. I told the story to Prometesky in his absence, and we never mentioned it more.

Indeed the next thing Harold said, as he addressed his envelope, was, "It is a pity to lose this room."

"There is one that I can fit up like it," I said. "All the things here are mine." And then I was glad to divert his attention by proposing to go and inspect Mount Eaton, as soon as he had had some much-needed food, since Prometesky was out, and we at once plunged into the "flitting" affairs, glad in them to stifle some of the pain that Eustace had given, but on which we neither of us would dwell.

Was Harold changed, or had he only gone on growing in the course he had begun? He was as simple and unconsciously powerful as ever, but there was something there was not before, reminding me of the dawning of Undine's soul.

He was called off in the middle of our consultation as to the house, which was our common property, by a message that Mr. Crabbe would be glad of a few minutes with him.

"Was there any fresh annoyance about the Hydriots?" I asked, when he came back.

"Oh, no! The rascal is come over to my side. What do you think he wanted to say? That he had been to look at my grandfather's will, and he thinks you could drive a coach and horses through it; and he proposes to me to upset it, and come in as heir-at-law! The scoundrel!"

"After all," I said, after a pause, "it would be very good for poor Arghouse if you thought it right."

"I should not be very good for Arghouse if I did such a thing as that," returned Harold. "No, poor old Eu, I'm not going to disturb him because he has got out of my hands, and I think *she* will take care of the people. I daresay I bullied him more than was bearable."

Would Harold have so forgiven even Eustace's ingratitude three years ago?

CHAPTER VII.

SUNSET GOLD AND PURPLE.

WE had a happy time after that; our Sunday was a very glad and peaceful one, with our thanksgiving in the morning, and Dora's pleasure in the dear old children's service in the afternoon. Poor child, she liked everything that she had only submitted to when she was with us, and Harold took her away on the Monday in a more resigned frame of mind, with a kind of promise that she would be good if the Horsmans would let her.

Then came the removal, and I must say there was some compensation for the pain of leaving my old home in that sense of snugness and liberty in our new plenishing, rather like the playing at

dolls' houses. We had stable room for Harold's horse and my pony—the kangaroo, alas! had pined and died the winter that Harold was away ; the garden was practicable, and the rooms were capable of being made home-like and pleasant.

The Tracys were out of reach for the present. Dermot was gone to Ireland, and Lady Diana and her daughter were making a long round of visits among friends, so that there was nothing for it but waiting, and as it was hopeful waiting, enlivened by Viola's letters to me, Harold endured it very happily, having indeed much to think about.

There was Prometesky's health. It was ascertained that he must undergo an operation, and when we found that all the requisite skill could be had near at hand, I overruled the scruples about alarming or distressing me. I knew that it would be better for him to be watched by George Yolland, and for Harold to be at home, and I had come to love the old man very heartily.

One day of expectation, in which he was the most calm and resolute of us, one anxious day when they sent me to Miss Woolmer, until Harold came, thankful and hopeful to fetch me, a few more of nursing accepted with touching gratitude, and he was soon downstairs again, a hale old man, though nearly seventy, but more than ever bent on his retreat to La Trappe. It distressed us much. He seemed so much to enjoy intelligent talk with Miss Woolmer and the Yollands; he so delighted in books, and took such fresh interest in all, whether mechanical or moral, that was doing at the Hydriots—of which, by-the-by, as first inventor, the company had contrived, at Harold's suggestion, to make him a shareholder to an extent that would cover all his modest needs, I could not think how he would bear the change.

"My dear young lady," he said to me, when I tried to persuade him out of writing the first letter, "you forget how much I have of sin upon me. Can years of negation of faith, or the ruin of four young lives, and I know not of how

many more, be repented of at ease in your pleasant town, amid the amiable cares you young people are good enough to lavish on the old man?"

I made some foolish answer about his having meant all for good and noble purposes, but he shook his head.

"Error, my dear madam, error excusable, perhaps, in one whose country has been destroyed. I see, now that I have returned, after years alone with my God, that the work I tried to precipitate was one of patience. The fire from heaven must first illuminate the soul, then the spirit, and then the bonds will be loosed of themselves; otherwise we do but pluck them asunder to set maniacs free to rush into the gulf. And as to my influence on my two pupils, your brothers, I see now that what began in filial rebellion and disobedience could never end well. I bless God that I have been permitted to see, in the next generation, the true hero and reformer I ought to have made of my Ambrose. Ah! Ambrose, Ambrose! noble young spirit, would that any tears and penance of

mine would expiate the shipwreck to which I led thee!" and he burst into tears.

He had, of course, seen the Roman Catholic priest several times before encountering the danger of the operation, and was a thoroughly devout penitent, but of his old Liberalism he retained the intense benevolence that made the improvements at the potteries a great delight to him, likewise the historical breadth of understanding that prevented his thinking us all un-Catholic and unsafe.

It was a great blessing that Harold was not held back but rather aided and stimulated by the example of the man to whom he most looked up; but with his characteristic silence, it was long before I found that, having felt, beside his mother's death-bed, how far his spiritual wants had outgrown me, he had carried them to Ben Yolland, though the old morning habit remained unbroken, and he always came to the little room I had made like my old one.

Ben Yolland had become more entirely chaplain to the Hydriots. Those two brothers lived together

in a curious way at what we all still called the "Dragon's Head," each with his own sitting-room and one in common, one fitted as a clergyman's study, the other more like a surgery ; for though George had given up his public practice since he had been manager of the works, he still attended all the workpeople and their families, only making them pay for their medicines "when it was good for them."

Thus the care of the souls and bodies of the Hydriots was divided between the two, and they seemed to work in concert, although George showed no symptom of change of opinions, never saying anything openly to discredit his brother's principles, nay, viewing them as wholesome restraints for those who were not too scientific to accept them, and even going to church when he had nothing else to do, but by preference looking up his patients on a Sunday. He viewed everything, from religion to vice, as the outcome of certain states of brain, nerves, and health ; and so far from being influenced by the example of Prometheus, regarded him as a proof of his own

theory, and talked of the Slavonic temperament returning to its normal forms as the vigour of life departed.

Nevertheless, he did not seem to do harm to the workpeople. Drunkenness was at least somewhat restrained, though far from conquered, and the general spirit of the people was wonderful, compared with those of other factories. Plans were under discussion for a mission chapel, and the people themselves were thoroughly anxious for it.

Lord Erymanth returning, kindly came to call on me in my new house, and as I was out of the drawing-room at the time, he had ten minutes' conversation with the gentleman whom he found reading at the window, and was so much pleased with him that when making the tour of our small domain, he said, "You did not introduce me, Lucy. Is that an Australian acquaintance of Harold Alison's? I did not expect such high cultivation."

"An Australian acquaintance, yes," said I, "and also a Polish count."

"Prometesky!"

"Prometesky," said I, to whom the name had begun to sound historical. "I did not know you did not recognise him."

I was afraid my old friend would be angry with me, but he stood still and said, "I never saw him except at his trial. I can understand now the fascination he was said to have possessed. I could not conscientiously assist your nephew in his recall, but I highly honour the generous perseverance with which he has effected it; and I am happy to acknowledge that the subject is worthy of his enthusiasm. Animosity may be laid aside now, and you may tell Mr. Harold Alison that I heartily congratulate him."

"And he—Count Stanislas we call him—sees now that he was mistaken," I said.

"Does he? That is the best of the higher stamp of men, my dear. They know when they are wrong, and own it. In fact, that's the greatest difference between men. The feeble and self-opinionated never acknowledge an error, but the truly sincere can confess and retrieve their hallucinations and prejudices. Well, I am glad to

have seen Prometesky, and to be disabused of some ideas respecting him."

Count Stanislas, on the other hand, received me with, "So that is Erymanth! The tyrant, against whom we raged, proves a charitable, benevolent, prosy old gentleman. How many illusions a few decades dispel, and how much hatred one wastes!"

Lord Erymanth had told me that his sister would soon be at home, and in September I was surprised by a call from Dermot. "Yes, I'm at Arked," he said, "Killy Marey is full of Dublin workmen. My uncle has undertaken to make it habitable for me, like an old brick, and, in the meantime, there's not a room fit to smoke or sleep in, so I'm come home like a dutiful son."

"Then your mother is come?"

"Oh yes; she is come for six weeks, and then she and the St. Glears are to join company and winter at Rome."

"At Rome?"

"Prevention, you see," said Dermot, with a

twinkle in his eye, as if he were not *very* uneasy. "The question is whether it is in time. She will have Piggy's attentions at Christmas. He is to come out for the vacation."

Then he further told me that his mother had brought home with her a Mrs. Sandford with a daughter, heiress to £60,000, and to a newly-bought estate in Surrey, and newly-built house "of the most desirable description," he added, shrugging his shoulders.

"And what sort of a young lady is she?"

"Oh, very desirable, too, I suppose."

"But what is she like?"

"Like? Oh, like other people," and he whistled a little, seeming relieved when "Count Stanislas" came in, and soon after going to hunt up Harry at the Hydriot works.

It made me uncomfortable; it was so evidently another attempt on his mother's part to secure a rich home for him in England, and his tone did not at all reassure me that, with his easy temper, he would not drift into the arrangement without his heart in it. "Why should I be so

vexed about it? It might be very good for him," said I to myself.

No, his heart was not in it, for he came back with Harold, and lingered over our fire beyond all reasonable time, talking amusing random stuff, till he had left himself only ten minutes to ride home in to dinner.

The next day Harold and I rode over to Arked together. Dermot was the first person we saw, disporting himself with a pug-dog at the door. "The fates have sped you well," said he, as he helped me down from my pony. "My mother has taken Mrs. Sandford in state to call on Mrs. Vernon, having arranged that Viola and I should conduct the sixty-thousand pounder to admire the tints in the beech woods. The young ladies are putting on their hats. Will it be too far for you, Lucy, to go with us?"

Wherewith he fraternally shouted for "Vi," who appeared all in a rosy glow, and took me upstairs to equip me for walking, extracting from me in the meantime the main features of the story

of the bloodhound, and trembling while she gave exulting little nods.

Then she called for Nina (were they so intimate already?) and found that young lady in a point device walking dress, nursing the pug and talking to Dermot, and so we set forth for the beech-woods, very soon breaking our five into three and two. Certainly Lady Diana ought to have viewed Dermot's attentions to the sixty-thousand pounder as exemplary, for he engrossed her and me so entirely with the description of Harold's victory over a buck-jumper at Boola Boola, that it was full a quarter of an hour before she looked round to exclaim, "What is become of Viola?" And then we would not let her wait, and in truth we never came again upon Viola and Harold till we overtook them at the foot of the last hill, and they never could satisfy Miss Sandford where they had been, nor what they had seen, nor how they had missed us; and Dermot invented for the nonce a legend about a fairy in the hill, who made people gyrate round it in utter oblivion of all things; thus successfully diverting the attention of Miss

Sandford, who took it all seriously. Yes, she certainly was a stupid girl.

Every moment that lengthened the veritable enchantment of that autumn afternoon was precious beyond what we knew, and we kept Miss Sandford prowling about the garden on all sorts of pretexts, till the poor girl was tired out, as well she might be, for we had kept her on her feet for three hours and a half, and she made her escape at last to join Viola.

I always think of Harold and Viola, as I saw them at that moment, on the top of the western slope of the lawn, so that there was a great ruddy gold sky behind them, against which their silhouettes stood out in a sort of rich dark purple shade.

"Oh, they are looking at *such* a sunset!" cried Miss Sandford, climbing up the hill.

"Query!" murmured Dermot, for the faces were in profile, not turning towards the sun in the sky, but to the sunbeams in one another's eyes—sunbeams that were still there when we joined them, and, in my recollection, seem to

blend with the glorious haze of light that was pouring down in a flood over the purple moorland horizon, and the wood, field, and lake below. I was forced to say something about going home, and Viola took me up to her room, where we had one of those embraces that can never be forgotten. The chief thing that the dear girl said to me was, "Oh, Lucy. How he has suffered! How shall I ever make it up to him?"

Poor dear Viola, little did she think that she was to cause the very sharpest of his sufferings.

Nay, as little did he, when we rode home together with the still brilliant sky before us. I never see a lane ending in golden light, melting into blue, and dark pine trees framing as it were the brightness, with every little branch defined against it, without thinking of that silence of intense, almost awe-struck joy in which Harold went home by my side, only at long intervals uttering some brief phrase, such as "This *is* blessedness," or "Thank God, who gives women such hearts."

He had told her all, and it had but added a reverent, enthusiastic pity and fervour to that admiring love which had been growing up so long, and to which he had set the spark.

His old friend was admitted to share their joy, and was as happy as we were, perhaps doubly so, since he had beheld with despair Harold's early infatuation and its results, which had made him fear, during those three wretched years, that all the lad's great and noble gifts would be lost in the coarse excesses of his wild life, with barbarous prosperity without, and a miserable, hardening home. That he should have been delivered from it, still capable of refinement, still young and fresh enough for a new beginning, had been a cause of great joy, and now that all should be repaired by a true and worthy love, had seemed beyond hope. We built our castles over the fire that evening, Harold had already marked out with his eye the tract of Neme Heath which he would reclaim; and the little he had already set me on doing among the women and children at the potteries, had

filled us with schemes as to what Viola was to carry out.

Some misgivings there were even then. Lady Diana was not to be expected to like Harold's £1,200 a year as well as Piggy's heirship to the Erymanth coronet, or any of the other chances that might befall an attractive girl of twenty.

For coldness and difficulties we were prepared, but not for the unqualified refusal with which she met Harold the next morning, grounding all on the vague term, "circumstances," preventing his even seeing Viola, and cutting short the interview in the manner of a *grande dame* whose family had received an insult.

Dermot, however, not only raging, but raving, on his side, assured him of the staunchness of his sister, and her resolve to hold by him through everything ; and further, in sundry arguments with his mother, got to the bottom of the "circumstances." She had put away from herself the objection to the convict birth and breeding, by being willing to accept Eustace, to whom exactly

the same objections applied ; and when she called Eustace a man of more education and manners, her son laughed in her face at the comparison of "that idiot" with a man like Harold.

Then came the "past life," a much more tangible objection, but Dermot was ready there, declaring that whatever Harold had done, considering his surroundings, was much less heinous than his own transgressions, after such a bringing up as his, and would his mother say that nobody ought to marry him? Besides, to whom had she given Di? They were not arguments that Lady Diana accepted, but she weakened her own cause by trying to reinforce it with all the Stympson farrago, the exaggeration of which Dermot, after his own meeting with Henry Alison, and with Prometesky to corroborate him, was fully prepared to explode, to the satisfaction even of Lord Erymanth.

Harold himself was deeply sensible of the stain and burthen of his actual guilt, more so, indeed, than he had ever been before, both from the religious influences to which he had submitted

himself, and from the sense of that sweet innocence of his Viola's; but his feeling had come to be that if his Heavenly Father loved and forgave him, so, in a lesser way, Viola forgave him because she loved him. He did not wonder at nor complain of Lady Diana's not thinking him worthy of her good and lovely child. He would be thankful to submit to any probation, five, seven, ten years without any engagement, if he might hope at last. Even Lord Erymanth, when he saw how his darling's soul was set on it, thought that thus much might be granted.

But Lady Diana had still another entrenchment which she had concealed, as it were, to the last, not wishing to shock and pain us all, she said. Though she said she had reason to complain of not having been told from the first that Harold had once been insane, nothing could induce her to sanction her daughter's marriage with a man whose mind had been disordered; nay, who had done mortal injury in his frenzy. It was a monstrous idea!

Dermot's reply to this was, that nobody, then,

ought to marry who had had a delirious fever ; and he brought Prometesky over to Arked to testify to her how far the attack had been from anything approaching to constitutional insanity. The terrible fall, of which Harold's head still bore the mark, the shock, the burning sun, were a combination of causes that only made it wonderful that he should have recovered the ensuing brain fever, and the blow to his rival had been fatal by the mere accident of his strength. A more ordinary man would have done no serious harm by such a stroke, given when not accountable. Lady Diana answered stiffly that this might be quite true, but that there had been another cause for the temporary derangement which had not been mentioned, and that it was notorious that Mr. Alison, in consequence, had been forced to avoid all liquors, and she appealed to Dermot as to the effects of a very small quantity on his friend's brain.

Poor Dermot ! It was bitter enough for him to have that orgie at Foling brought forward against his friend. Nor could any representation appease Lady Diana.

I thought her very cruel and unreasonable then, and I am afraid I believe that if Harold had had ten, or even five thousand a year, these objections would never have been heard of; but after years and experience have cooled my mind, it seems to me that on several grounds she was justified in her reluctance, and that, as Viola was so young, and Harold's repentance had been comparatively recent, she might fairly have insisted on waiting long enough to see whether he were indeed to be depended upon, or if Viola's affection were strong enough to endure such risk as there might be.

For Dermot, resolute to defend his friend, and declaring that his sister's heart should not be broken, was the prime mover in Harold going up to consult the most eminent men of the day on mental disease, Prometesky going with him as having been his only attendant during his illness, to give an account of the symptoms, and Dermot, who so comported himself in his excitement as to seem far more like the lover whose hopes might have depended on the verdict on his

doubtful sanity, than did the grave, quiet, self-contained man, who answered all questions so steadily.

The sentence was so far satisfactory that the doctor confirmed Prometesky's original view, that concussion of the brain, aggravated by circumstances, had produced the attack, and that there was no reasonable ground for apprehension of its recurrence, certainly not of its being hereditary. But he evidently did not like the confession of the strange horror of dogs, which Harold thought it right to mention as having been brought on by the circumstances of his accident, and he would not venture to say that any "exciting cause" might not more easily affect the brain than if nothing had ever been amiss. Yet when Dermot tarried, explaining that he was the brother of a young lady deeply concerned, the doctor assured him that whereas no living man could be insured from insanity, he should consider the gentleman he had just seen to be as secure as any one else, since there was no fear of any hereditary taint, and his having so entirely outgrown and cast off all traces

of the malady was a sign of his splendid health and vigour of constitution.

But Lady Diana was still not satisfied. She still absolutely refused all consent, and was no more moved at the end of three weeks than before. Dear Harold said he did not wonder, and that if he had seen himself in this true light, he would have loved Viola at a distance without disquieting her peace, but since he had spoken and knew she loved him, he could not but persevere for her sake. We could see he said it with a steady countenance, but a burning heart. Neither he nor I was allowed to see Viola, but there was Dermot as constant reporter, and, to my surprise, Viola was not the submissive daughter I had expected. Lady Diana had never had any real ascendancy over her children's wills or principles. Even Viola's obedience had been that of duty, not of the heart, and she had from the first declared that mamma might forbid her to marry Harold, or to correspond with him, and she should consider herself bound to obey; but that she had given him her promise, and that she

could not and would not take it back again. She would wait on for ever, if otherwise it could not be, but he had her troth plight, and she *would* be faithful to it. She would not give up her crystal cross, and she sent Harold her love every day by her brother, often in her mother's very hearing, saying she was too proud of him to be ashamed. She had resolved on her own line of passive obedience, but of never renouncing her engagement, and her brother upheld her in it; while her uncle let himself be coaxed out of his displeasure, and committed himself to that compromise plan of waiting which his sister viewed as fatal, since Viola would only lose all her bloom, and perhaps her health. Nothing, she said, was so much to be deplored for a girl as a long engagement. The accepting a reformed rake had been always against her principles, and she did not need even the dreadful possibility of derangement, or the frightful story of his first marriage, to make her inexorable. Viola, we were told, had made up her mind that it was a case for perseverance, and all this time kept

up dauntlessly, not failing in spirits nor activity, but telling her brother she had always known she should have to go through something, but Harold's love was worth it, and she meant to be brave; how should she not be when she knew Harold cared for her; and as to what seemed to be objections in the eyes of others, did they not make her long the more to compensate him?

"She has to make all her love to me, poor little woman, and very pretty love it is," said Dermot.

Whether Harold made as much love in return to their ready medium I cannot tell, for their conferences were almost always out of doors or at the office, and Harold was more reserved than ever. He was not carrying matters with the same high hand as his little love, for, as he always said, he knew he had brought it all on himself.

He never complained of Lady Diana, but rather defended her to her son for not thinking him fit for her daughter, only adhering to his original standpoint, that where there was so much

love, surely some hope might be granted, since he would thankfully submit to any probation.

We all expected that this would be the upshot of our suspense, and that patience and constancy would prevail; and by the help of immense walks and rides, and a good deal of interest in some new buildings at the potteries, and schemes for the workmen, Harold kept himself very equable and fairly cheerful, though his eyes were weary and anxious, and when he was sitting still, musing, there was something in his *pose* which reminded me more than ever of Michel Angelo's figures, above all, the grand one on the Medicean monument. He consorted much more now with Mr. Yolland, the curate, and was making arrangements by which the school chapel might expand into a Mission Church, but still I did not know that he was finding the best aid through this time in the devotions and heart-searchings to which the young clergyman had led him, and which were the real cause of the calm and dignified humility with which he waited.

At last Lady Diana, finding herself powerless

with her daughter, sent a letter to Harold, beginning: "I appeal to your generosity." A very cruel letter in some ways it was, representing that he had acquiesced in her judgment, that there were certain unfortunate passages in his past life which made it her painful duty to prevent her child from following the dictates of an inexperienced heart. Then she put it to him whether it were not a most unfortunate position for a young girl to be involved in an engagement which could never be fulfilled, and which was contrary to the commands of her only remaining parent, and she showed how family peace, confidence, and maternal and filial affection must suffer if the daughter should hold fast persistently to the promise by which she held herself bound. In fact, it was an urgent entreaty, for Viola's own sake, that he would release her from her promise. Dermot was shooting at Erymanth, and neither he nor I knew of this letter till Harold had acted. He rode at once to Arked, saw Lady Diana, and declared himself convinced that the engagement, having no chance of sanction, ought to be given up. Rather

than keep Viola in the wearing state of resistance and disobedience her mother described, he would resign all hopes of her.

Lady Diana went to her daughter with the tidings, that Mr. Alison saw the hopelessness of his suit, and released her from her promise.

"You have made him do so, mamma," cried Viola. "If he releases me I do not release myself."

Finally, Lady Diana, astonished to find Harold so reasonable and amenable, perceived that the only means of dealing with her daughter was to let them meet again. Of course no one fully knows what passed then. Harold told me, the only time he spoke of it, that "he had just taken out his own heart and crushed it?" but Viola dwelt on each phrase, and, long after, used to go over all with me. He had fully made up his mind that to let Viola hold to her troth would neither be right nor good for her, and he used his power of will and influence to make her resign it. There was no concealment nor denial of their mutual love. It was Viola's comfort to remember that.

"But," said Harold, "your mother has only too good reasons for withholding you from me, and there is nothing for it but to submit, and give one another up."

"But we do not leave off loving one another," said poor Viola.

"We cannot do what we cannot."

"And when we are old——"

"That would be a mental reservation," said Harold. "There must be no mutual understanding of coming together again. I promised your mother. Because I am a guilty man, I am not to break up your life."

He made her at last resign her will into his, she only feeling that his judgment could not be other than decisive, and that she could not resist him, even for his own sake. He took her for a moment into his arms, and exchanged one long burning kiss, then, while she was almost faint and quite passive with emotion, he laid her on the sofa, and called her mother. "Lady Diana," he said, "we give up all claim to one another's promise, in obedience to you. Do we not, Viola?"

"Yes," she faintly said.

He gave her brow one more kiss, and was gone.

He took his horse home, and sent in a pencil note to me: "All over; don't wait for me.— H. A."

I was dreadfully afraid he would go off to Australia, or do something desperate, but Count Stanislas reassured me that this would be unlike Harold's present self, since his strength had come to be used, not in passion, but in patience. We dined as best we could without him, waited all the evening, and sat up till eleven, when we heard him at the door. I went out and took down the chain to let him in. It was a wet misty night, and he was soaked through. I begged him to come in and warm himself, and have something hot, but he shook his head, as if he could not speak, took his candle, and went upstairs.

I made the tea, for which I had kept the kettle boiling all this time, and Prometesky took his great cup in to him, presently returning to say, "He is calm. He has done wisely, he has

exhausted himself so that he will sleep. He says he will see me at once to my retreat in Normandy. I think it will be best for him."

Count Stanislas was, in fact, on the eve of departure, and in a couple of days more Harold went away with him, having only broached the matter to me to make me understand that the break had been his, not Viola's; and that I must say no more about it.

Dermot had come over and raged against his mother, and even against Harold, declaring that if the two had "stood out" they would have prevailed, but that he did not wonder Harold was tired of it.

Harold's look made him repent of that bit of passion, but he was contemptuous of the "for *her* sake," which was all Harold uttered as further defence. "What! tell him it was for her sake when she was creeping about the house like a ghost, looking as if she had just come out of a great illness?"

Dermot meant to escort his mother and sister to Florence, chiefly in order to be a comfort to the

latter, but he meant to return to Ireland as soon as they had joined the St. Glears. "Taking you by the way," he said, "before going to my private La Trappe."

Prometesky took leave of me, not quite as if we were never to meet again, for his experimental retreat was to be over at Christmas, and he would then be able to receive letters. He promised me that, if I then wrote to him that Harold stood in need of him for a time, he would return to us instead of commencing the novitiate which would lead to his becoming dead to the outer world.

Harold was gone only ten days, and came back late on a Friday evening. He tried to tell me about what he had done and seen, but broke off and said, "Well, I am very stupid ; I went to all the places they told me to see at Rouen and everywhere else, but I can't recollect anything about them."

So I let him gaze into the fire in peace, and all Saturday he was at the potteries or at the office, very busy about all his plans and also taking in hand the charge for George Yolland, for both

brothers were going on Monday to take a fortnight's holiday among their relations. He only came in to dinner, and after it told me very kindly that he must leave me alone again, for he wanted to see Ben Yolland. A good person for him to wish to see, "but was all this restlessness?" thought this foolish Lucy.

When he came in, only just at bed-time, there was something more of rest, and less of weary sadness about his eyes than I had seen since the troubles began, and as we wished one another good night he said, "Lucy, God forgives while he punishes. He is better to us than man. Yolland says I may be with you at church early to-morrow."

Then my cheeks flushed hot with joy, and I said how thankful I was that all this had not distracted his thoughts from the subject. "When I wanted help more than ever?" he said.

So in some ways that was to me at least a gladsome Sunday, though not half so much at the time as it has become in remembrance, and I could not guess how much of conscious peace or

joy Harold felt, as, for the first and only time, he and I knelt together on the chancel step.

He said nothing, but he had quite recovered his usual countenance and manner, only looking more kind and majestic than ever, as I, his fond aunt, thought, when we went among the children after the school service, to give them the little dainties they had missed in his absence; and he smiled when they came round him with their odd little bits of chatter.

We sat over the fire in the evening, and talked a little of surface things, but that died away, and after a quarter of an hour or so, he looked up at me and said, "And what next?"

"What are we to do, do you mean?" I said, for I had been thinking how all his schemes of life had given way. We spoke of it together. "Old Eu did not want him," as he said, and though there was much for him to do at the Hydriot works and the Mission Chapel, the Reading Room, the Association for Savings, and all the rest which needed his eye, yet for Viola's peace he thought he ought not to stay, and the same

cause hindered the schemes he had once shared with Dermot; he had cut himself loose from Australia, and there seemed nothing before him. "There were the City Missions," he said, wearily, for he did not love the City, and yet he felt more than ever the force of his dying father's commission to carry out his longings for the true good of the people.

I said we could make a London home and see Dora sometimes, trying to make him understand that he might reckon on me as his sister friend, but the answer was, "I don't count on that."

"You don't want to cast me off?"

"No, indeed, but there is another to be thought of."

Then he told me how, over my letters to him in New South Wales, there had come out Dermot's account of the early liking that everyone nipped till my good-girlish submission wounded and affronted him, and he forgot or disliked me for years; how old feelings had revived, when we came in contact once more; but how he was withheld from their manifestation, by the miserable

state of his affairs, as well as by my own coldness and indifference.

I made some sound which made Harold say, "You told me to keep him away."

"I knew I ought," I remember saying faintly.

"Oh—h—!" a prolonged sound, that began a little triumphantly, but ended in a sigh, and then he earnestly said, "You do not think you ought to discourage him now? Your mother did not forbid it for ever."

"Oh no, no; it never came to that."

"And you know what he is now?"

"I know he is changed," was all I could say.

"And you will help him forward a little when he comes back. You and he will be happy."

There might be a great surging wave of joy in my heart, but it would not let me say anything but, "And leave you alone, Harold?"

"I must learn to be alone," he said. "I can stay here this winter, and see to the things in hand, and then I suppose something will turn up."

"As a call?" I said.

"Yes," he answered. "I told God to-day that

I had nothing to do but His service, and I suppose He will find it for me."

There was something in the steadfast, yet wistful look of his eyes, that made me take down the legend of St. Christopher and read it aloud. Reading generally sent him into a doze, but even that would be a respite to the heartache he so patiently bore, and I took the chance, but he sat with his chin on his hand and his eyes fixed attentively on mine all the time, then held out his hand for the book, and pondered, as was his thorough way in such matters. At last he said, "Well, I'll wait by the stream. Some day He will send me some one to carry over."

We little thought what stream was very near!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FATAL TOKEN.

TUESDAY morning brought a strange little untidy packet, tied with blue ribbon, understamped, and directed to Harold Alison, Esquire, in the worst form of poor Dora's always bad handwriting. Within was a single knitted muffatee, and a long lock of the stiffly curling yellow hair peculiar to Dora's head. In blotted, sloping roundhand was written :—

“MY DEAR HARRY,—

“Good-bye, I do fele so very ill, I can't do any more. Don't forget I allwaies was your wiffe.

“I am your affex.,

D. A.”

We looked at each other in wonder and dismay, sure that the child must be very ill, and indignant that we had not been told. Harold talked of going up to town to find out ; I was rather for going, or sending, to Therford for tidings, and all the time, alas ! alas ! he was smoothing and caressing the yellow tress between his fingers, pitying the child and fancying she was being moped to death in the school-room.

We determined on riding to Therford, and Harold had hastened to the office to despatch some business first, when Mr. Horsman himself came in—on his way to the Petty Sessions—to explain matters.

Mrs. Randall Horsman had arrived with her children at Therford the day before, flying from the infection of smallpox, for which the doctor had declared Dora to be sickening. The whole family had been spending the autumn months at the seaside. Nussy Horsman had been with them and had taken Dora about with him much more than had been approved. In one of these expeditions he had taken her into the shop of a village

ratcatcher, where, it had since been ascertained, two children were ill of smallpox. She had been ailing ever since the party had returned to London ; the doctor had been called in on Monday, and had not only pronounced the dreadful name of the disease, but, seeking in vain for the marks of vaccination on her arms, he greatly apprehended that she would have it in full and unmitigated virulence.

Mrs. Randall Horsman had herself and her children vaccinated without loss of time and fled to the country. Her husband would spend all day in his chambers, and only sleep at home on the ground-floor with every precaution, and Dora had been left in the charge of a young under-house-maid, whose marked face proved her safety, until the doctor could send in a regular nurse. It was this wretched little stupid maid who was ignorant enough to assist the poor child in sending off her unhappy packet, all unknowing of the seeds of destruction it conveyed.

I had had a slight attack of undoubted small-pox when a young child, and I immediately resolved

on going to nurse my poor Dora, secure that she would now be left to me, and unable to bear the thought of her being among strangers. I went at once to the office to tell Harry, and Baby Jack walked with me as far as our roads lay together, asking me on the way if it were true that Harold Alison was engaged to Miss Tracy, and on my denial, saying that Mrs. Randall had come down full of the report; that Nussy had heard of it, and, on Sunday afternoon, had teased Dora about it to such a degree that she had leaped up from the sofa and actually boxed his ears, after which she had gone into such a paroxysm of tears and sobs that she had been sent to bed, and in the morning the family mind began to perceive she was really ill. The poor child's passionate jealousy had no doubt prompted her letter, as well as her desire to take leave of the object of her love; and knowing her strange character as I did, I was sure the idea was adding tenfold to the misery of the dreadful illness that was coming on her.

I had to pursue Harold to the potteries, where

one of the workmen directed me to him, as he was helping to put in order some machine for hoisting that was out of gear. "Bless you, ma'am," said the man, "he is as strong as any four of we."

When I found him, his consternation was great, and he quite agreed with me that I had better go up that very afternoon and take charge of Dora, since Baby Jack answered for it that Randall Horsman would be most grateful and thankful.

Harold found out the hours for the trains, and did everything to expedite me. He made it certain that poor little Dora had not been vaccinated. When she was born, no doctor lived within sixty miles of Boola Boola, and nobody had ever thought of such a thing.

"And you, Harry?" I asked, with a sudden thrill of alarm.

"Do you expect me to remember?" he asked with a smile.

I begged him to look for the moons upon his arm, and at any rate to undergo the operation again, since, even if it had been done in his infancy,

the effect might have worn out, and it was only too probable that in the case of a child born on board a sailing vessel, without a doctor, it had been forgotten. He gave in to my solicitude so far as to say that he would see about it, but reminded me that it was not he who was going into the infection. Yes, I said, but there was that lock of hair and the worsted cuff. Such things did carry contagion, and he ought to burn them at once.

"Poor Dora!" he said, rather indignantly.

Oh that I had seen them burnt! Oh that I had taken him to Dr. Kingston's for vaccination before I went away, instead of contenting myself with the unmeaning, half-incredulous promise to "see about it!" by which, of course, he meant to mention it when George Yolland came home. Yet it might have made no difference, for he had been fondling and smoothing that fatal curl all the time we were talking over the letter.

He came to the station with me, gave me the kindest messages for Dora, arranged for my telegraphing reports of her every day—took care of me as men will do when they seem to think their

womankind incapable without them, making all the more of me because I did not venture to take Colman, whom I sent to visit her home. He insisted on Mr. Ben Yolland, who had been detained a day behind his brother, going in a first-class carriage with me. I leant out at the window for the parting kiss, and the last sight I had of my dear Harold, as the train steamed out of the station, was bearing on his shoulder a fat child—a potter's—who had just arrived by the train, and had been screaming to his mother to carry him, regardless of the younger baby and baskets in her arms. It might well make my last sight of him remind me of St. Christopher.

That journey with the curate was comfortable in itself, and a great comfort to me afterwards. We could not but rejoice together over that Sunday, and Ben Yolland showed himself deeply struck with the simplicity and depth that had been revealed to him, the reality of whatever Harold said, and his manner of taking his dire disappointment as the just and natural outcome of his former life. Many men would have

been soured and driven back to evil by such a rejection. Harold had made it the occasion of his most difficult victory and sharpest struggle; yet all the time he was unconscious how great a victory it was. And so thorough was the penitence, so great the need of refreshment after the keen struggle for self-mastery, and so needful the pledge of pardon, that though he had never been confirmed, there was no doubt as to making him welcome at once to the Heavenly Feast. Well that it was so!

The "What next" concerned Mr. Yolland as much as it did me. He could not bear to think of relinquishing one who—all unknown to himself—did more to guide and win the hearts of those Hydrionts than teaching or sermons could ever do, and yet no one could advise Harold to remain after this winter. In the reprieve, however, we both rejoiced, and Ben then added, "For my brother's sake, especially."

"Do you think the example tells on him?" I ventured on asking.

"I can hardly say it does," was the answer.

"George used to point to Harold Alison as a specimen of a vigorous physical development so perfectly balanced as to be in a manner self-adjusting, without need of what he called imaginative influences. I always thought he was a little staggered that evening that he had to summon you, Miss Alison, to his help ; but he had some theory of sentiment to account for it, and managed, as people do, to put it aside. Lately, however, he has been looking on, he says, with curiosity—I believe with something more. You see he reveres Alison for what he *is*, not for what he knows."

"Of course not ; your brother must know far more than Harold."

"But the strength of character and will impresses him. The bending of such a nature to faith, the acceptance of things spiritual, by one *real*, unimaginative and unsophisticated, and, above all, the *self* conquest, just where a great Greek hero would have failed, have certainly told on George, so that I see more hope than I have ever done before."

So careful of me was Mr. Yolland, that he only parted with me at Randall Horsman's door, where I was gladly welcomed by the master of the house, and found my poor little niece a grievous spectacle, and so miserable with the horrible illness, that she only showed her pleasure in my coming by fretting whenever anyone else touched her.

She had it badly in the natural form, but never was in immediate danger, and began in due time to recover. I had ceased my daily telegrams, and had not been alarmed by some days' intermission of Harold's letters, for I knew that Dermot was at Arked alone, and that by this time the Yollands would be returned and my nephew would have less time to spend on me.

One dismal wintry afternoon, however, when I was sitting in the dark, telling Dora stories, a card was brought up to me by the little housemaid. The gentleman begged to see me. "Mr. Tracy" was on the card, and the very sight startled me with the certainty that something was amiss.

I left the girl in charge and hurried down to the room, where Dermot was leaning over the mantel-shelf, with his head against his arms, in a sorrowful attitude, as if he could not bear to turn round and face me. I flew up to him, crying out that I knew he was come to fetch me to Harold; Dora was so much better that I could leave her.

He turned up to me a white haggard face, and eyes with dismay, pity, and grief in them, such as even now it wrings my heart to recall, and hoarsely said in a sunken voice, "No, Lucy, I am not come to fetch you!" and he took my hand and grasped it convulsively.

"But he has caught it?" Dermot bent his head. "I must go to him, even if he bids me not. I know he wants me."

"No!" again said Dermot, as if his tongue refused to move. "Oh, Lucy, Lucy, I cannot tell you!"

And he burst into a flood of tears, shaking, choking even rending him.

I stood, feeling as if turned to stone, and

presently the words came out in a sob, "Oh, Lucy, he is dead!" and, sinking on the nearest seat, his tempest of grief was for the moment more frightful than the tidings, which I could not take in, so impossible did the sudden quenching of that glorious vitality seem. I began in some foolish way to try to console him, as if it were a mere fancy. I brought him a glass of water from the sideboard, and implored him to compose himself, and tell me what made him say such terrible things, but he wrung my hand and leant his head against me, as he groaned, "I tell you, it is true. We buried him this morning. The noblest, dearest friend that ever——"

"And you never told me! You never fetched me; I might have saved him," was my cry; then, "Oh! why did you not?"

Then he told me that there had been no time, and how useless my presence would have been. We sat on the sofa, and he gasped out something of the sad story, though not by any means all that I afterwards learnt from himself

and from the Yollands, but enough to make me feel the reality of the terrible loss. And I will tell the whole here.

Left to himself, the dear fellow had no doubt forgotten all about vaccination, or any peril to himself, for he never mentioned it to Dermot, who only thought him anxious about Dora. On the Saturday they were to have had a day's shooting, and then to have dined at Erymanth, but Harold sent over in the morning to say he had a headache and could not come, so Dermot went alone. When the Yollands came home at nine at night a message was given that Mr. Alison would like to see Mr. George as soon as he came in; but as the train had been an hour late, and the message had not been delivered immediately on their coming in, George thought it could not concern that night, so he waited till morning; but he was awaked in the winter twilight by Harold at his door, saying, "Doctor, I'm not quite right. I wish you would come up presently and see after me."

He was gone again, while he was being called

to wait ; and, dressing as fast as possible, George Yolland went out after him into the dark, cold, frosty, foggy morning, and overtook him, leaning on the gate of a field, shivering, panting, and so dizzy, that it was with difficulty he was helped to the house. He made known that he had felt very unwell all the day before, and had had a miserable night, in which all the warnings about infection had returned on him. The desire to keep clear of all whom he might endanger, as well as a fevered—perhaps already half-delirious—longing for cool air, had sent him forth himself to summon George Yolland. And already strong shivering fits and increased distress showed what fatal mischief that cold walk had done. All he cared now to say was that he trusted to his doctor to keep everybody out of the house ; that I was not to be called away from Dora, and that it was all his own fault.

One person could not be kept away, and that was Dermot Tracy. He came over to spend the Sunday with his friend, and finding the door closed, and Richardson giving warning of smallpox, only

made him the more eagerly run upstairs. George could by that time ill dispense with a strong man's help, and after vaccinating him, admitted him to the room, where the checking of the eruption had already produced terrible fever and violent raving.

It was a very remarkable delirium, as the three faithful watchers described it. The mind and senses seemed astray, only not the will. It was as if all the vices of his past life came in turn to assail him, and he was writhing and struggling under their attacks, yet not surrendering himself. When — the Sunday duties over — Ben Yolland came in, he found him apparently acting over some of the wild scenes of his early youth, with shreds of the dreadful mirth, and evil words of profane revelry; and yet, as if they struck his ears, he would catch himself up and strike his fist on his mouth, and when Ben entered, he stretched out his arms and said, "Don't let me." Prayer soothed him for a short interval, but just as they hoped that sleep might come, the fierce struggle with oppression brought back the old habits of violent language, and then the distressed endeavour to

check himself, and the clutch at the clergyman's aid. Ben Yolland saw, standing in the room, a great rough wooden cross which Harold had made for some decorating plan of mine. He held it over him, put it into his hand, and bade him repeat after him, "Christ has conquered. By Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy precious Death and Burial, good Lord deliver us."

So it went on hour after hour, evening closing into night, the long, long night brightening at last into day, and still the fever raged, and the fits of delirious agony came on, as though every fiend that had ever tempted him were assailing him now. Yet still he had the power to grasp the Cross when it was held to him, and speak the words, "Christ has conquered," and his ears were open to the prayer, "By Thy Cross and Passion, by Thine Agony and Bloody Sweat, good Lord deliver us!"—the prayer that Ben prayed like Moses at Rephidim. Time came and went, the Northchester physician came and said he *might* be saved, if the eruption could only be brought out, but he feared that it had been thrown inwards,

so that nothing would avail ; but of all this Harold knew nothing, he was only in that seething brain, whose former injury now added to the danger, living over again all his former life, as those who knew it could trace in the choked and broken words. Yet, as the doctors averred, that the conscience and the will should not be mastered by the delirium was most unusual, and proved the extraordinary force of his character and resolution, even though the conflict was evidently a great addition to his sufferings.

Worst of all was the deadly strife, when with darkness came the old horror of being pursued by hell hounds, driven on by Meg and the rival he had killed—nay, once it was even by his little children. Then he turned even from the Cross in agony. "I cannot! See there! They will not let me!" and he would have thrown himself from his bed, taking the hands that held him for the dogs' fangs. And yet even then a command rather than a prayer from the priest reached his ears. He wrestled, with choking, stifling breath, as though with a weight on his chest, grappling with his

hands as if the dog were at his throat ; but at last he uttered those words once more, " Christ has conquered ;" then with a gasp, as from a freed breast, for his strength was going fast, fell back in a kind of swoon. Yes, he *was* delivered from the power of the dog, for after that, when he woke, it was in a different mood. He knew Ben, but he thought he had little Ambrose sitting on his pillow ; held his arm as if his baby were in it, and talked to them smiling and tenderly, as if glad they had come to him, and he were enjoying their caresses, their brightness, and beauty. Nor did the peace pass away. He was so quiet that all hoped except George Yolland, who knew the mischief had become irreparable ; and though he never was actually sensible, the borderland was haunted no more with images of evil or of terror, but with the fair visions fit for " him that overcometh." Once they thought he fancied he was showing his children to Viola or to me. Once, when Dermot's face came before him, he recurred to some of the words used in the struggle about Viola.

"I don't deserve her. Good things are not for me. All will be made pure there."

They thought then that he was himself, and knew he was dying, but the next moment some words, evidently addressed to his child, showed them he was not in our world ; and after that all the murmurs were about what had last taken up his mind—the Bread of Heaven, the Fruit of Everlasting Life.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." That was what Mr. Yolland ventured now to say over him, and it woke the last respondent glance of his eyes. He had tasted of that Feast of Life on the Sunday he was alone, and Ben Yolland would even then have given it to him, but before it could be arranged, he could no longer swallow, and the affection of the brain was fast blocking up the senses, so that blindness and deafness came on, and passed into that insensibility in which the last struggles of life are, as they tell us, rather agonising to the beholder than to the sufferer. It was

at sundown at last that the mightiest and gentlest spirit I ever knew was set free.

Those three durst not wait to mourn. Their first duty was to hasten the burial, so as to prevent the spread of contagion, and they went at once their different ways to make the preparations. No form of conventional respect could be used, but it was the three who so deeply loved him who laid him in the rough-made coffin, hastily put together the same evening, with the cross that had served him in his conflict on his breast, and three camellia buds from Viola's tree. Dermot had thought of her and ridden over to fetch them. There had been no disfigurement. If there had been he might have lived, but still it was a comfort to know that the dear face was last seen in more than its own calm majesty, as of one who lay asleep after a mighty conquest. Over the coffin they placed the lion's skin. It had been left in the room during his illness, and must have been condemned, and it made his fit pall when they took it to be buried with him. It was before daybreak that, with good old Richardson's help, they carried him down to a

large cart belonging to the potteries, drawn by the two big horses he used to pet, and driven by George Yolland himself. They took him to our own family burial-place in Arghouse churchyard, where the grave had been dug at night. They meant no one to be there, but behold ! there was a multitude of heads gathered round, two or three hundred at least, and when the faithful four seemed to need aid in carrying that great weight the few steps from the gate, there was a rush forward, in spite of the peril, and disappointment when no help was accepted.

Ben Yolland read the service over the grave, and therewith there was the low voice of many, many weepers, as they closed it in, and left him there among his forefathers, under his lion's skin ; and even at that moment a great, golden, glorious sun broke out above the horizon, and bathed them all over with light, while going forth as a giant to run his course, conquering the night mists.

Then they turned back to the town, and Dermot came by the next train to town to tell me.

But of all this I at first gathered but little,

for his words were broken and his voice faint and choked, not only with grief, but with utter exhaustion; and I was so slow to realise all, that I hardly knew more than the absolute fact, before a message came hurriedly down that Dora was worse, and I must come instantly. Dermot, who had talked himself into a kind of dull composure, stood up and said he would come again on the morrow, when he was a little rested, for, indeed, he had not lain down since Saturday, and was quite worn out.

I went up, with heart quailing at the thought of letting that passionately loving creature guess what had befallen her, and yet how could I command myself with her? But that perplexity was spared me. The tidings had, through the Horsman family, reached the house, and, in my absence, that same foolish housemaid had actually told Dora of them point-blank. She said nothing, but presently the girl found her with her teeth locked and eyes fixed in what looked like a convulsion, but was in reality such suppressed hysteria as she had had before.

She soon came out of that attack, but was exceedingly ill all that night and the next day, her recovery being altogether thrown back by feverishness and loss of appetite ; but, strange child that she was, she never named Harold, nor let me speak of him. I think she instinctively shrank from her own emotion, and had a kind of dread and jealous horror of seeing anyone else grieve for him.

Dermot did not come the next day, but a note was brought me, left, the servant said, by the gentleman in a cab. It told me that he felt so ill that he thought it wisest to go at once to the smallpox hospital, and find out whether it were the disease, or only vaccination and fatigue. It was a brave unselfish resolve, full of the spirit he had imbibed, and it was wise, for the illness was upon him already, the more severe from his exhausted state and the shock he had undergone. Mr. Randall Horsman, who was very kind, managed that I should hear of him, and I knew he was going on fairly well, and not in any special danger.

But oh! that time seems to me the most wretched that ever I passed, up in those great London attic nurseries, where Dora and I were prisoners—all winter fogginess, with the gas from below sending up its light on the ceiling, and Dora never letting me sit still to grieve. She could not bear the association or memory, I believe, and with the imperious power of recovery used to keep me reading Mayne Reid's story-books to her incessantly, or else playing at backgammon. I hate the sound of dice to this hour, and when I heard that unhappy French criminals, the night before their execution, are apt to send for Fenimore Cooper's novels, it seemed to reveal Dora's state of mind.

After two or three days, George Yolland came up to see me. He had been to see Dermot, and gave me comfort as to his condition and the care taken of him; but the chief cause of the visit was that they wanted my authority for the needful destruction of whatever had been in *that* room, and could not be passed through fire. Mr. Yolland had brought me my Harold's big, well-worn pocket-

book, which he said must undergo the same doom, for though I was contagion proof, yet harm might be laid up for others, and only what was absolutely necessary must be saved.

First of all, indeed, lay in their crumpled paper poor Dora's fatal gifts, treasured, no doubt, as probably her last; and there, in a deep leathern pocket, was another little parcel with Viola's crystal cross, which her mother had made her return. She might have that now, it would bear disinfecting; but the Irish heath-bells that told of autumn days at Killey Marey must go, and that brief note to me that had been treasured up—yes, and the quaint old housewife, with D. L. (his aunt's maiden initials), whence his needles and thread used to come for his mending work. An old, worn pencil-case kept for his mother's sake—for Alice was on the seal—was the only thing I could rescue; but next there came an envelope with "My will" scrawled on it. Mr. Yolland thought I ought to open it, to see who had authority to act, and it proved that we alone had, for he was made executor, with

£1,000. A favourite rifle was bequeathed to Eustace, an annuity of £50 to Smith, and all the rest of the property was to be shared between Dora and me. It was in the fewest words, not at all in form, but all right, and fully witnessed. It was in the dear handwriting, and was dated on the sad lonely Saturday when he felt himself sickening. The other things were accounts and all my letters, most of which could follow the fate of all that he had touched in those last days. However, the visit was a comfort to me. George Yolland answered my questions, and told me much more than poor Dermot could do in his stupefaction from grief, fatigue, and illness, even if I then could have understood.

He told me of the grief shown by all Mycening and Arghouse, and of the sobbing and weeping of mothers and children, who went in a broken pilgrimage on Sunday afternoon to the grave at Arghouse, of the throngs at the church and the hush, like a sob held back, when the text was given out: "Thanks be to Him who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Yet on the Saturday evening there was something more noted still. The men stood about when they had come up for their wages to the office, where, but a week before, Harold had paid them, with a sore struggle to see and to count aright, as some even then had observed; and at last their spokesman had explained their great desire to do something themselves in memory of "the best friend they ever had," as they truly called him. Some of them had seen memorial-windows, and they wanted Mr. Yolland to take from each a small weekly subscription throughout the winter, to adorn the new chapel with windows. "With the history of Samson a killin' of the lion," called out a gruff voice. It was the voice of the father of the boy whom Harold had rescued on Neme Heath.

"So," said George Yolland, as he told me, "the poor fellows' hearty way was almost more than one could bear, but I knew Alison would have me try to turn it to some sort of good to themselves; so I stood up and said I'd take it on one condition only. They knew very well what

vexed Mr. Alison most in themselves, and the example he had set—how he had striven to make them give up making beasts of themselves. Wouldn't they think with me it was insulting him to let a drunkard have a hand in doing a thing to his memory? So I would manage their collection on condition they agreed that whoever took more than his decent pint a day—or what ever else sober men among them chose to fix it at—should have his money returned on the spot. Poor fellows, they cheered and said I was in the right, but whether they will keep to it is another thing."

They did keep to it. All that winter, while the chapel was building, there were only five cases in which the money had to be returned, and two of those took the pledge, pleaded hard, and were restored. Indeed, I believe it was only the habitually sober who ventured on the tolerated pint. Of course there were some who never came into the thing at all, and continued in their usual course; but these were the dregs, sure to be found everywhere, and the main body of the

Hydriot potters kept their word so staunchly, that the demon of intoxication among them was slain by those Samson windows, as Harold had never slain it during his life.

Beautiful bright windows they are, glowing with Samson in his typical might, slaying his lion, out of the strong finding sweetness, drinking water after the fight, bearing away the gates, and slaying his foes in his death. But Samson is not there alone. As the more thoughtful remarked, Samson was scarce a worthy likeness for one who had had grace to triumph. No, Samson, whose life always seems like a great type in shattered fragments, must be set in juxtaposition with the great Antitype. His conflict with Satan, His Last Supper, His pointing out the Water of Life, His Death and His victory over death, shine forth, giving their own lesson of Who hath won the victory.

We ventured to add two little windows with St. George and St. Christopher, to show how Christ's soldiers may follow in the conquest, treading down the dragon, and bending to the

yoke of the Little Child who leads them out of many waters.

That winter of temperance proved the fulcrum that had been wanting to the lever of improvement. Schools of art, concerts, lectures, choir preparation, recreation, occupation, and interests of all sorts were vigorously devised by the two Yollands; and, moreover, the "New Dragon's Head" and the "Genuine Dragon's Head," with sundry of their congeners, died a natural death by inanition; so that when the winter was over, habits had been formed, and a standard of respectability set up, which has never entirely fallen, and a spirit which has withstood the temptation of strikes. Of course, the world has much to do with the tone of many. What amount of true and real religion there may be, can only be tested by trial, and there are many who do not show any signs of being influenced by anything more than public opinion, some who fall below that; but, as everyone knows, the Hydriot works have come to be not only noted for the beauty and excellence of their execution, and the orderliness,

intelligence, and sobriety of their artisans, but for their large congregations, ample offertories, and numerous communicants.

Of course all this would never have kept up but for the Yollands. The Hydriots wife, are children, everything to him who is now called Vicar of St. Christopher's, Mycening. He has refused better preferment, for he has grown noted now, since the work that Harold had begun is still the task he feels his charge.

And whatever is good is led by the manager of the works, whose influence over the workmen's minds has never failed. Even when he talked to me on that day, I thought there was a change in his tone. He had never sneered (at least in my hearing) nor questioned other men's faith, but when he told me of Harold his manner had something of awe, as well as of sorrow and admiration, and I could not but think that a sense had dawned out that the spiritual was a reality, and an absolute power over the material.

The great simple nature that had gradually and truly undergone that influence had been

watched and studied by him, and had had its effect. The supernatural had made itself felt, and thenceforth he made it his study, in a quiet, unobtrusive manner, scarcely known even to his brother, but gradually resulting in heart-whole acceptance of faith, and therewith in full devotion of heart and soul.

Did Harold rejoice in that victory, which to him would have been one of the dearest of all ?

CHAPTER IX.

CONCLUSION.

I MUST finish my story, though it seems hardly worth telling, since my nephew, my tower of strength and trust, had suddenly sunk away from me in the prime of his manhood.

The light seemed gone out of the whole world, and my heart felt dull and dead, as if I could never heed or care for anything again. Even Dermot's illness did not seem capable of stirring me to active anxiety in this crushed, stupid state, with no one to speak to of what lay heavy on my heart, no one even to write to; for who would venture to read my letters? nay, I had not energy even to write to poor Miss Woolmer. We got into a way of going on day after day with

Dora's little meals, the backgammon, and the Mayne Reid, till sometimes it felt as if it had always been thus with us from all time, and always would be ; and at others it would seem as if it were a dream, and that if I could but wake, I should be making tea for Harold in our cheerful little drawing-room at Mount Eaton. At last I had almost a morbid dread of breaking up this monotonous life, and having to think what to do or where to go. The Randall Horsmans must long for our departure, and my own house was in a state of purification, and uninhabitable.

The doctor said that Dora must be moved as soon as it could be managed, for in that London attic she could have no impulse towards recovery ; and while it still seemed a fearful risk, he sent us off to St. Clement's, a little village on the south coast, where he knew of rooms in a great old manor-house which had sunk to farmer's use, and had a master and mistress proof against infection.

When I brought my tired, worn-out, fretting

charge in through the great draughty porch, and was led up the old shallow oak stairs to a big panelled room, clean and scantily furnished, where the rats ran about behind the wainscot, and a rain-laden branch of monthly rose went tap, tap against the window, and a dog howled all night long, I thought we had come to a miserable place at the end of the earth. I thought so still the next morning, when the mist lay in white rolls and curls round the house; and the sea, when we had a peep of it, was as lead-coloured as the sky, while the kind pity of the good wife for Dora's weak limbs and disfigured face irritated me so that I could hardly be civil.

Dora mended from that day, devoted herself to the hideous little lambs that were brought in to be nursed by the fire; ate and drank like a little cormorant, and soon began to rush about after Mr. and Mrs. Long, whether in house or farm-yard, like a thing in its native element, while they were enchanted with her colonial farm experience, and could not make enough of "Little Missy."

I had a respite from Mayne Reid, and could wander as far as I pleased alone on the shingle, or sit and think as I had so often longed to do ; but the thoughts only resulted in a sense of dreariness and of almost indifference as to my fate, since the one person in all the world who had needed me was gone, and I had heard nothing whatever of Dermot Tracy. He might be gone out to his mother and sister, or back to Ireland. Our paths would never come together again, for he thought I did not care for him. Nay, was I even sure of his recovery? His constitution had been much tried! He was in a strange place, among mere professional nurses! Who could tell how it had been with him?

Everything went from me that had loved me. Even Dora was to leave me as soon as people ceased to be afraid of her.

Letters had found out the married pair on their return from the cataracts of the Nile. Eustace had immediately been vaccinated fourteen times, but he was shocked and appalled, and the spirit of his letter was—

O while my brother with me stayed,
Would I had loved him more,

and I forgave him much.

Hippolyta likewise wrote with feeling, but it rather stung me to be thanked for my care of "her poor little sister," as if Dora were not my child before she was hers. As soon as it was considered safe, Dora was to be returned to Horsman keeping, and as the Randall party declined to receive her again, Philippa would convey her to a school at Baden-Baden.

And Dora declared she was glad! There was none of the angry resistance with which she had left me in the spring; when I had done nothing for her compared with what I had gone through for her now; but I believe I was dull company, and showed myself displeased at her hardness and wild outbreaks of spirits, and that the poor child longed to escape from all that reminded her of the unbearable sorrow at the bottom of her heart. But it was a grievance to a grievance-making temper, such as I feel mine was.

The most wholesome thing I received was a letter from Prometesky, to whom I had written the tidings that Harold would never need his comfort more. The old man was where the personal loss was not felt, and he knew more deeply than anyone the pain which that strong fervent heart suffered in its self-conquests, so that he did not grieve for Harold himself; but he gave me that sympathy of entire appreciation of my loss which is far better than compassion. For himself, he said his last link with the world was gone, he found the peace, and the expression of penitence, his soul required, in the course he was about to embrace, and I might look on this as a voice from the grave. I should never hear of him more, but I should know that, as long as life was left him, it would be spent in prayers for those whose souls he had wrecked in his overboiling youth. He ended with thanks to all of us, who he said had sent him to his retreat with more kindly and charitable recollections than he should otherwise have carried thither. I never did hear of him again; Dermot went to the con-

vent some years later, and tried to ascertain if he lived, but the monks do not know each others' names, and it failed.

The village of St. Clement's, a small fishing-place, was half-a-mile off, through lanes a foot deep in mud, and with a good old sleepy rector of the old school, not remarkable for his performances in Church. I was entering the little shop serving as the post-office, where I went every day in the unreasonable expectation of letters, when I heard a voice that made me start, "Did you say turn to the right?"

And there, among the piles of cheeses, stood a figure I knew full well, though it had grown very thin, and had a very red and mottled face at the top.

We held out our hands to one another in silence, and walked at once out of hearing. Dermot said he was well, and had been as kindly looked after as possible, and now he had been let out as safe company, but his family and friends would hardly believe it, so he had come down to see whether he could share our quarantine.

Happily a few cottages of the better sort had accommodation for lodgers, and one of them—for a consideration—accepted “the gentleman’s” bill of health. He walked on by my side, both of us feeling the blessing of having someone to speak to. He, poor fellow, had seen no being who had ever heard of Harold, except George Yolland, who came when he was too ill to talk, and we went on with the conversation that had been broken off weeks before, with such comfort as it could give us in such a loss as ours.

He walked all the way back with me, and I was frightened to see how tired he looked. I took him to Mrs. Long for the refreshment she loved to give, and begged for the pony for him to ride home on, and a boy to fetch it back.

It was wonderful how much more blue there was in the sea the next day, how the evergreens glistened, and how beautiful and picturesque the old house grew; and when I went out in the morning sunshine, for once, inclined to admit some beauty in the staggering black-legged and visaged lambs, and meditating a walk to the village, I saw

Dermot coming across the yard, so wearily and breathlessly, that I could only say, "How could you?"

He looked up piteously. "You don't forbid me?" he said.

I almost cried as I told him it was only his fatigue that I objected to; and indeed he was glad enough to take Dora's now vacated place on the great sofa, while we talked of Viola. Writing to her had been, of course, impossible for him, and he had only had two short notes from her, so meaningless that I thought she wrote them fearing to disturb him while he was ill; but he muttered an ominous line from Locksley Hall, vituperated Piggy, and confessed that his ground for doing so was that his mother reported Viola as pleased with foreign life, and happy with her cousins. I said it was his mother's way, and he replied, "Exactly so; and a girl may be worried into anything." A slight dispute on that score cheered him a little, for he showed himself greatly depressed. He was going—as soon as he had gathered a little strength—back to the duties he

had promised to fulfil on his own property, but he hated the thought, was down-hearted as to the chances of success, and distrustful of himself among discouragements, and the old associations he had made for himself. "It is a different thing without Alison to look to and keep one up," he said.

"There are higher motives," was my stupid speech.

"It is precious hard on a poor fellow to be left alone with his higher motives, as you call them, before he has well begun to act on his lower."

And then, I don't know how, he began talking drearily, almost as if I was not there, of his having once begun to fancy he could do something creditable enough to make me some day look on him as I used to do in the good old times. My heart gave a great bound, and remembering how Harold said I discouraged him, out came, "How do you know that I don't?"

How he sprang up! And—no, I can't tell what we said, only we found it was no new beginning, only taking up an old, old precious thread—some-

thing brought it all out. He had talked it all over with Harold when he came back from Florence, and had taken home a little hope which he said had helped him through the solitary hours of his recovery. So it was Harold who, after all, gave us to one another.

Outspoken Dora informed us, before the day was much older, that the Longs had asked whether that was her brother, or my young man. So we took them into our confidence, and even borrowed "the trap". for one of the roughest and the sweetest drives that ever we had, through those splashing lanes, dropping Dermot at his lodgings to write his letters, while the harvest moon made a path over the sea, no longer leaden, but full of silvery glittering light. There had something come back into the air which made us feel that life was worth living, after all!

Next morning the good people, who were much excited about our affairs, sent the pony for him, and he came in full force with that flattering Irish tongue of his, bent on persuading

me that, old lovers as we were, with no more to find out about one another, there was nothing to wait for. 'How could he go back by himself (what a brogue he put on! yet the tears were in his eyes) to his great desolate castle, with not a living man in it at all at all, barring the Banshee and a ghost or two; and as I had nothing to do, and nowhere to go, why not be married then and there without more ado? If I refused, he should think it was all my pride, and that I couldn't take that "ornary object," as he had overheard himself described that day. (As if I did not love him the better for that marred complexion!) His mother? His uncle? They had long ago repented of having come between us ten years ago, and were ready to go down on their knees to any dacent young woman who would take him, let alone a bit of an heiress, who, though not to compete with the sixty-thousand pounder, could provide something better than praties and buttermilk for herself at Killy Marey.'

I could not help thinking dear Harold might

have remembered Killy Marey's needs when he gave me that half of his means. And as to going back to Mount Eaton, ghosts of past times would meet me there, whose pain was then too recent to have turned into the treasure these recollections are to me.

There would be just time, Dermot declared, if he put up our banns the very next Sunday, to go through with it before the time Pippa had appointed for receiving Dora, and it would save all the trouble of hunting up a surrogate and startling him with his lovely face.

However, he did startle the poor old parish clergyman effectually by calling on him to publish the banns of marriage between Dermot Edward St. Glear Tracy and Lucy Percy Alison, both residing in this parish. He evidently thought we were in hiding from someone who knew of some just cause or impediment ; but whereas we certainly did full justice to our ages twenty-eight and twenty-six, he could only try to examine us individually very politely, but betraying how uncomfortable he was.

It was most amusing to see how his face cleared up when, two days later, he met us on the beach with a dignified old white-haired gentleman, though Dermot declared that the imposing title mentioned on the introduction made him suspect us of having hired a benignant stage father for the occasion.

The dear old uncle Ery had actually come down to chaperone us, and really act as much as possible as a father to me ; and as I had likewise sent for Colman and a white silk dress, the St. Clement's minds were free to be pleasantly excited about us. Lord Erymanth had intended to have carried us off to be married from his castle, but we begged off, and when he saw Dermot, he allowed that it was not the time to make a public spectacle of what (Dermot was pleased to say) would have the pleasing pre-eminence of being "the ugliest of weddings," both as to bridegroom and bridesmaid. For he and Dora used to make daily fun of their respective beauties, which were much on a par, since, though she had three weeks' start of him, the complaint having been unmitigated in her, had

left much more permanent-looking traces. Those two chose to keep each other up to the most mirthful nonsense-pitch, and yet I am sure none of us felt so light of spirit as we must have appeared, though, perhaps, the being on the edge of such a great shadow made the sunshine seem brighter.

We had considered of beginning with a flying visit to see how poor Viola really was, but the Italian letters prevented this. Lady Diana accepted me cordially and kindly as a daughter, and said all that was proper; but she actually forestalled us by desiring her son not to come out to her, for she thought it much better for Viola not to have painful recollections revived, and Viola herself wrote in a way that disappointed us—loving indeed, but with a strain of something between lightness and bitterness, and absolutely congratulating her brother that there was no one on my side to bring up bygones against him. One half of her letter was a mere guide-book to the Roman antiquities, and was broken off short for some carnival gaiety.

Lord Erymanth clearly liked his letters as little as we did. In the abstract, in spite of the first cousinship, I am afraid he would rather have given Viola to Pigou St. Glear than to Harold Alison, but he had thought better of his niece than to think she could forget such a man so soon.

However, the day came. Dora slept with me, and that last night when I came to bed, I found the true self had made a reassertion in one of those frightful fits of dumb hysteria. Half the night Colman and I were attending to her, but still she never opened to me, more than by clinging frantically round my neck in the intervals. She fell asleep at last, and slept till we actually pulled her out of bed to be dressed for the wedding; but we agreed that we could not expose our uncle (who was to escort her to Northchester station) to being left alone with her in one of these attacks, and, as our programme had never been quite fixed, we altered it so far as to pass through Northchester and see her safe into Baby Horsman's hands.

She was altogether herself by day, gave no sign of emotion, and was as merry as possible throughout the journey, calling out to Dermot airily from the platform that she should send him a present of sour krout from Baden. Poor child, it was five years before we saw her again!

We had scarcely had time to settle in at Killy Marey before Lady Diana implored us to meet her in London, without explaining what was the matter. When we came to Lord Erymanth's house, we were met by Viola, very thin, but with a bright red colour on her usually pale cheeks, and a strange gleaming light in her eyes, making them larger than ever; and oh, how she did talk! Chatter, chatter, about all they had seen or done, and all the absurdities of the people they had met; mimicking them and making fun, and all the time her mother became paler and graver, looking as if she had grown ten years older. It went on so all dinner-time. She talked instead of eating, and all the evening those bright eyes of hers seemed to be

keeping jealous watch that no one should exchange any words in private.

Nor could we till poor Lady Diana, with a fagged miserable face, came to my room at night, and I called Dermot in. And then she told us how the child had "seemed to bear everything most beautifully," and had never given way. I believe it was from that grain of perversity in Viola's high-spirited nature, as well as the having grown up without confidence towards her mother, which forbade her to mourn visibly among unsympathising watchers; and when her hope was gone led her in her dull despair to do as they pleased, try to distract her thoughts, let herself be hunted hither and thither, and laugh at and play with Pigou St. Glear quite enough to pass for an encouraging flirtation, and to lead all around her to think their engagement immediately coming on. The only thing she refused to do was to go to the Farnese Palace, where was the statue to which there had more than once been comparisons made. At last, one day, when they were going over the Vatican Galleries, everyone was startled by a

strange peal of laughter, and before a frieze of the Labours of Hercules stood Pigou, looking pale and frightened, and trying to get Viola away, as she stood pointing to the carrying home of the Erymanthian boar, and laughing in this wild forced way. They got her away at last, but Piggy told his father that he would have no more to do with her, even if their uncle left her half his property, though he never would tell what she had said to him.

Since that time she had gone on in this excited state, apparently scarcely eating or sleeping, talking incessantly, not irrationally, but altogether at random, mockingly and in contradiction to everyone; caring chiefly to do the very thing her mother did not wish, never resting, and apparently with untiring vigour, though her cheeks and hands were burning, and she was wasting away from day to day.

Lady Diana really thought her mind was going, and by this time would have given all she had in the world to have been able to call Harold back to her. Diana Enderby tried reproofs for her

flightiness, but only made her worse ; with Dermot she would only make ridiculous nonsense, and utter those heartrending laughs ; and when I tried to soothe her, and speak low and quietly, she started away from me, showed me her foreign purchases, or sang snatches of comic songs.

Dermot went at last to consult the same doctor to whom, half a year before, he had taken Harold ; and it was contrived that he should see and hear her at a dinner-party without her knowledge. He consoled us very much by saying that her mind was not touched, and that it was a fever on the nerves, produced by the never having succumbed to the unhappiness and the shock which, when he heard in what manner she had lost Harold, he considered quite adequate to produce such effects. Indeed, he had been so much struck with Harold himself, that he was quite startled to hear of his death, and seemed to think an excess of grief only his due. He bade us take her to her home, give her no external excitement, and leave her as much as possible to go her own way, and let her feel herself

unwatched, and, if we could, find her some new yet calming, engrossing occupation.

We took the advice, and poor Lady Diana besought us to remain with her for the present; nor, indeed, could we have left her. Our chief care was to hinder her oppressing her daughter with her anxiety; for we found that Viola was so jealous of being watched that she would hardly have tolerated us, but that I had real business in packing up my properties at Mount Eaton. For the first week she took up her old occupations in the same violent and fitful way, never sitting long to anything, but rushing out to dash round the garden, and taking long walks in all weathers, rejecting companionship.

From various causes, chiefly Lady Diana's wretchedness and anxiety, Dermot and I had to wait a week before we could have the pony-chaise and go together to Harold's grave. The great, massive, Irish granite cross was not ready then, and there was only the long, very long, green mound, at my mother's feet. There lay two wreaths on it. One was a poor thorn garland—

for his own Hydriot children had, we heard, never left it untended all the winter — the other was of a great white-flowered rhododendron that was peculiar to the Arked garden.

Was it disloyal to Harry that we thought more of Viola than we did of him that first time we stood by his grave? It was an immense walk from Arked to Arghouse Church, over four miles even by the shortest way, which lay through rough cart-tracks which we had avoided in coming, but now felt we had better take.

Nearly half way home, under a great, old pollard ash, we saw a little brown figure. It was Viola, crouched together with her head on her knees, sitting on the bank. She started up and tried to say something petulantly joking about our always dogging her, but she broke down in a flood of tears to which sheer weariness conduced. She was tired out at last, footsore, and hardly able to move a limb, when Dermot almost lifted her into the carriage, the dreadful, hard self-control all over now, when, in those long lanes, with the Maybushes meeting overhead, she

leant against me and sobbed with long - pent anguish, while her brother walked at the pony's head.

She had quite broken down now, and her natural self was come back to us. When we came home, I got her up to her own room and Dermot went to his mother. She had a long, quiet sleep, lying on her bed, and when she woke it was growing dark on the May evening. She looked at me a little while without speaking, and her eyes were soft again.

"Lucy," she said, "I think I have been very naughty, but they made me so."

I said, as I kissed her, that I thought "they" had done so.

"*He* would not have let anybody make him so," she said. "I was the bad one. I was almost unfaithful. I told him so to-day."

"Not unfaithful, dearest, only harassed and miserable beyond all bearing."

"Nothing is beyond bearing. I said so to myself over and over again. That was why I would let no one see that I minded."

"You tried to bear it proudly, all by yourself," I said ; "that was what made it so dreadful."

"He said it was God's will," said poor Viola, "but I knew it was mamma's. I did what he told me, Lucy ; I did not get so wrong as long as he lived, but after that I did not care what became of me, and yet I did love him as much as ever."

She seemed to look on me as his representative, and was now ready to take any persuasion of mine as coming from him. She admitted her mother, was gentle and natural with her, ate and drank at her bidding, and went to bed pale and worn down, but not ill. She never gave in or professed indisposition, but for more than ten days she "went softly," was very tired, and equal to nothing but lying on the sofa and sitting in the garden ; and it was in those days that sometimes with her brother, sometimes with me, she went over all that we could tell her, or she tell us, of him who had been so dear to us all. The first time she was alone with

Dermot, she kissed every remaining mark she could find in his face, and said she had ached to do it every time she saw him. All those wells of deeper thought that had been so long choked by the stony hardness of a proudly-borne sorrow seemed suddenly to open, when she gave herself up to the thought of Harold. She even arrived at sorrow for the way she had treated her mother; when he had given up his own hope rather than make her disobedient. She asked Lady Diana's pardon. She had never done so voluntarily in her whole life. She was met by tears and humility that softened and humiliated her in her sorrow more than aught else. Her precious flower-pot was in her window with its fragrant verbena, and I gave her the crystal cross again, telling her where I had found it, and she held it a moment and said, "Some day it will be buried with me. But I must do something to feel as if I deserved it. You know it comes to me like a token out of the sea of glass like unto crystal, where they stand that overcome! I think I'll only wear it at night when I think

I have done something, or conquered a bit of my perverseness with mamma."

A sudden idea came over me. Mr. Benjamin Yolland was in dire want of a lady as reference to a parish woman for his Hydriots. I had begun, but had been called away. Miss Woolmer had tried, but was not well enough, and there was no one else whom he thought capable. I was to stay at Arked for six weeks more; should I put Viola in the way? It would be work for *him*.

She caught at it. Lady Diana bridled a little as she thought of the two young men who managed the Hydriots, but the doctor's prescription recurred to her mind, and she consented.

Need I tell you how dear Aunt Viola's soul and spirit have gone forth with those Hydriot people, how from going once a week to meet the parish woman at Miss Woolmer's, she soon came to presiding at the mothers' meetings, to knowing everybody, and giving more and more of her time, her thoughts, her very self to them and being loved by them enormously. The spirit, fun, and enterprise that were in her fitted her, as they

began to revive, for dealing with the lads, who were sure to be devoted to anything so pretty and refined. When she began, the whisper that she was the love of their hero, gave them a romantic interest, and though with the younger generation this is only a tradition, yet "our lady" has won ground of her own, and is still fair and sweet enough to be looked on by those youths as a sort of flower of the whole world, yet their own peculiar property. For is she not a Hydriot shareholder, and does she not like to know that it was to Harold's revival of those shares that she chiefly owes her present means? Since her mother's death she has lived among them at the house that was old Miss Woolmer's, and is tranquilly happy in finding happiness for other people, and always being ready when any one needs her, as our dear old uncle does very often, though I think her Hydriot boys have the most of her.

Hippolyta made Eustace a good wife, and watched over him well; but there was no preventing his deficiency from increasing; it became acknowledged disease of the brain, and he did not survive

his cousin six years. Happily none of his feebleness of intellect seems to have descended to Eustace the third, who is growing up a steady, sensible lad under his mother's management ; and perhaps it is not the worse for Arghouse to have become a Horsman dependency.

It was the year before Eustace's death that the conductress of the school at Baden wrote to Mrs. Alison about Dora. The sad state of her brother had prevented her coming home or being visited, and though I exchanged letters with her periodically, we had not sufficient knowledge of one another for any freedom of expression after she had conquered the difficulties of writing.

When she was a little more than sixteen, came a letter to tell that she was wasting away in either atrophy or consumption, and that the doctors said the only hope for her was home and native air. Poor child ! what home was there for her, with her sister-in-law absorbed in the care of her brother, whose imbecility was no spectacle for one in a critical state of health and failing spirits ? We were at Arked at the time, and offered to go and

fetch her (it was Dermot's kind thought), leaving the children to Viola's care.

Poor dear, what a sight she was! Tall in proportion to the giant breed she came of, but thin to the most painful degree, and bending like a fishing-rod, or a plant brought up in the dark, which, by-the-by, she most resembled, with her white face and thin yellow hair. Her complexion had recovered, but her hair never had, nor, as it proved, her health, for she had been more or less ailing ever since she came, and the regimen of the frugal Germans had not supported the fast-growing English girl's frame, any more than the strict and thorough-going round of accurate education had suited the untrained, desultory intellect, unused to method or application. Nor did the company of the good, plodding, sentimental *mädchens* give any pleasure to the vehement creature, whose playfellow from babyhood had been a man—and such a man! Use did no good, but rather, as the childish activity and power of play and the sense of novelty passed, the growth of the womanly soul made the heart-hunger and solitude worse,

and spirit and health came yearly to a lower level.

She was too languid to be more than indifferent when she saw us, and the first sign of warmth that she gave was her kiss, when I went back to visit her after putting her to bed at the hotel. She looked up, put her arms round my neck, and said, "This is like the old days."

We brought her by slow stages to London, where Hippolyta came up to see her for one day, and was terribly shocked. The doctors were not hopeful, but said she might go where she pleased, and do what she liked, and as her one wish was to be with us, my dear husband laughed to scorn the notion that, whatever had been dear to Harold, should not be his sacred charge, and so we took her back.

And there, she did not die. She lay on the sofa day after day, watched the children at play, and listened dreamily to the family affairs, rested and was petted by us both, called it very comfortable, and was patient, but that whole winter seemed to remain where she was, neither better

nor worse. With the spring came a visit from George Yolland, a prosperous man, as he well deserved to be, and the foremost layman in all good works in the neighbourhood since dear old Lord Erymanth had been disabled. In the forenoons, when I was teaching the children, and Dermot was busy, he was generally in the drawing-room, talking to Dora, whose blue eyes had a vivid silent intelligence, like no one but Harold's. From the first day he had confirmed my conviction that, at any rate, she was not dying now, and she began to start into strength. She sat up all the evening, she walked round the garden, she drove out, she came down to breakfast. The day after that achievement, she came to me sobbing for joy with something inaudible about "his sake," while George was assuring Dermot that there was only one woman in the world for him !

So, on a bright summer day, we gave her to the friend Harold had gained on the same day as Dermot, and she went to be the happy mistress of Mount Eaton, and reign there, an abrupt woman, not universally liked, but intensely kind and true,

and much beloved by all who have cared to penetrate through her shell.

There ! my work is done, though I fear it is a weaker likeness of my young Alcides than even the faded photograph by my side, but I could not brook that you, my children, should grow up unknowing of the great character to whom your father and I owe one another, and all besides that is best in our lives. There are things that must surprise you about your dear father. Remember that he insisted on my putting them in, and would not have them softened, because, he said, you ought to have the portrait in full, and that, save at his own expense, you could not know the full gratitude he feels to the man who made a new era in our lives. He says he is not afraid either of the example for you, or that you will respect him less, and I know you will not, for you will only see his truth and generosity.

L. P. T.

All that your mother has written is true—
blessings on her !—every word of it, except that she

never could, and I hope none of you ever will, understand the depth and blackness of the slough Harold Alison drew me out of, by just being the man he was ; nor will she show you—for indeed she is blind to it herself—that it was no other than she, with her quiet, upright sweetness and resolution, that was the making of him and of both of us. Very odd it is that a woman should set it all down in black and white, and never perceive it was all her own doing. But if you see it, young people, what you have to do is to be thankful for the mother you have got and try to be worthy of her, and if the drop of Alison blood in you should make one of you even the tenth part of what Harold was, then you'll be your father's pride, and much more than he deserves.

D. E. ST. G. T.

Thank you, dear brother, for having let me see this, though I know Lucy did not intend it for my eyes, or she would not have been so hard on poor mamma. It shows me how naughty I must have been to let her get such a notion of our relations

with one another, but an outsider can never judge of such things. For the rest, dear Lucy has done her best, and in many ways she did know him better than anybody else did, and he looked up to her more than to anyone. But even she cannot reach to the inmost depth of the sweetness out of the strong, nor fully know the wonderful power of tender strength that seemed to wrap one's mind round and bear one on with him, and that has lasted me ever since, and well it may, for he was the very glory of my life.

V. T.

I am glad to have read it, because it explains a great deal that I was too much of a child to understand ; but I don't like it. I don't mean for putting in the fatal thing I did in my ignorant folly. I knew that, and she has softened my wilfulness. But there's too much flummery, and he was a hundred times more than all that. I had rather recollect him for myself, than have such a ladylike, drawing-room picture ; but Lucy means it well, and it is just as he smoothed and

combed himself down for her. Nobody should have done it but George. He would have made a man of him.

D. Y.

As if George could have done it! A lady must always see a man somewhat as a carpet knight, and ill would betide both if it were not so. But, allowing for this, and the want of "more power to her elbow," I am thankful to Mrs. Tracy for this vivid recall of the man to whom I and all here owe an unspeakable debt. For my own part, I can only say that from the day when I marvelled at his fortitude under the terrible pain of the lion's bites, to that when I saw the almost unexampled triumph of his will over the promptings of a disordered brain, he stood before me the grandest specimen of manhood I ever met, ever a victor, and, above all, over himself.

G. Y.

THE END.

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